

# Dragon<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE

## HELL ON EARTH

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on the Prime Planes

## MACHINE VS. MAGE

The Sheens  
Strike Back!

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# HIGH-LEVEL CAMPAIGNS

# Dragon®

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## ON THE COVER

When we asked Tony DiTerlizzi for a painting that would represent high-level campaigns, he responded with this illustration of an elven mage summoning one helluva big earth elemental. While the painting matched our thematic requirements, Tony says he did the painting because he "wanted to paint lichen, moss, and a blond."

For more from the wonderful imagination of Tony D., check out his PC Portraits on page 29.



# The Wyrms' Turn™

## High-Level Havoc

**Y**ou're probably wondering why I'm writing the editorial this month instead of Dave. Here's why: He comes to me right before the end of 1999 and says, "I want an editorial from you by the end of January. If I don't get it, you'll get the 'Jesse treatment.'" (See issue #246, "Love Slave of the Kobold Queen.")

Crap! So on top of all the work these jerks—er ... I mean, really nice guys who sign my timesheets—dump on me (see *DUNGEON Adventures* issue #80), I have to write an editorial.

When I asked for some ideas of what to write about, Dave tells me the theme is "High-Level Campaigns." Double-crap! Because I split my time between so many different campaigns, I've never actually played in what you'd call a "high-level" campaign. In fact, I don't think I've ever had a character above 8th level.

On the other hand, I have heard a lot of stories from players who like these sorts of games. Here's what I know about high-level campaigns:

- Monsters don't come in singles or even small groups anymore. At 1st level, your group might face a "group" of six orcs. At 20th level, you face the orc "horde" or an "armada" of dragons.
- Everyone plays a drow assassin/paladin.
- Thanks to abundant *wish* spells, the entire party's stats include decimal points.
- You go artifact hunting because you've "Gotta catch 'em all!"
- You're on a first-name basis with five of the Lords of the Nine. You've killed the other four.

• Whenever the party takes a vote, the characters have to take into consideration the opinions of the intelligent weapons.

• The party's mage has a better AC and more hit points than the average red wyrm.

• The group's base of operations is the Tomb of Horrors.

• The cleric's god comes to the cleric for advice.

• Your group has started whittling away at the bottom of a pantheon and is working its way up the chain of command.

Now that I think about it, maybe I should start a high-level campaign of my own. Let's see, starting level 20, the PCs can have the Wand of Orcus and every magical item in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*, and I can invite both Chris and Dave to play. But won't they be surprised when they see my M-16-toting goblins riding cyborg tarrasques armed with smartbombs, tactical nukes, and gatling lasers. Ah, revenge is sweet.



Chris Thomasson, Associate Editor

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# D-Mail™

## Three Cents

Here's my three cents on a couple of recent topics. First, the "Secrets Revealed" article was interesting, but the letter from Adam Lachapelle in #266 showed that not everybody understands it. The direction those rules are taking make characters more powerful; thus, his apparent problem indicates he misinterpreted the new experience points rule. The 20% penalty is not cumulative with the normal 2nd Edition rule; it replaces it. Thus, a two-class PC goes from 50% penalty to a nicer 40% penalty. A three-class PC goes from 66% penalty to 60%

## Roleplaying games are just like operating systems ...

penalty. A GM could limit multiclassing to three classes maximum to enforce some sanity, as well. Remember GMs, if you allow these rules, you'll have to handle the increased power the players have.

I also would like to say good work on the latest line of gaming software. The updates for the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Interactive Atlas* were welcome, though you still missed the *Accursed Tower* (hint, hint). Several years ago, I wrote a letter to a Mr. Rob Rep at TSR and started a nasty chain of internet paranoia concerning electronic gaming material. You've come a long way since then. Few remember it, but a simple posting of TSR's response started a flamewar that lasted for several years. TSR's new policies and their own embracing of the net show they will survive in the new arena.

Last on my list of topics is the new "Coming Attractions" section in issue

#267. I don't like it. It is far too simplified. Often, the previews in *DRAGON® Magazine* determine what products I am interested in. By removing the product description, I now have no clue as to what products are about. My wife and I were annoyed to see the new style, as it told nothing of who wrote what novel or what a product was about. Consider this reader feedback on the new format and revert back to the old style.

Otherwise, keep up the good work. I'm sad to see 2nd Edition fade away; I've invested a lot (\$1,000+) on the books

and non-campaign-specific source material. The information you leak on the new rules will determine whether I adopt the new version or become just like the 1st Edition diehards I mocked so many years ago. Roleplaying game rules are just like operating systems; I'm looking for a system that will support my old library of "software."

**Ken Forslund**  
Houston, TX

<http://users.ev1.net/~andief/krgg>

*Those pesky secrets on playing 3rd Edition certainly did puzzle a few people, though many more obviously grasped what they were meant to do. Fortunately, the added details in the "Countdown" articles should clear up most of the confusion, while the actual appearance of the 3E rules in August will settle all disputes. We know it's hard, but wait for it!*

## Keep in Touch!

To share your opinions on this issue of the magazine,

post a letter to "D-Mail," *DRAGON Magazine*,

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Send email to [dmail@wizards.com](mailto:dmail@wizards.com).

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*Note that in the new "Coming Attractions," there's still as much information—and more, actually—on the next month's products. The lists are for two and three months out. We keep those sections simple so we can make sure we have the latest accurate information on the products—and to save a little space so we can show off more of the artwork.*

*As for using old source material with the new rules, it should be a breeze with the help of the 3rd Edition Conversion Book, a product slated for release this fall. The vast majority of source material doesn't need conversion, but with the Conversion Book you'll be able to teach the new dog some old tricks.*

## Let's See Some Old School

I have collected *DRAGON Magazine* since issue #20. I have seen it create new worlds, characters, and spark the imagination. In this respect, I thank you. I do have some suggestions on some things that might be of interest to the readers.

1. The historical articles that you once published were insightful and well thought out. Articles depicting such things as new weapons and their use were interesting. However, the ones that stood out most were the descriptions of every day life in historical times. Some of the best were the monograms on actual battles with insightful comments on the strategies and tactics of the times. History, when well presented, is rich in texture, detail, betrayal, loyalty, and heroics that will add the needed depth to any game. Possibly you could look into reintroducing it as a section.

2. The old games such as *Spacequest* and *Starquest* and some of the home-made games of the early years would be

nice to wrap up into a single package or as installments in the magazine. Such things as *Tigel Manor* still have incredible retro appeal and are truly original in concept.

3. Bring back "Fineous Fingers" if it is at all possible! It was simple humor, but that was its uniqueness.

Again, thanks for the many years of labor. You bring the world the piece of magic it so desperately needs today with your art, letters, articles, and creativity.

**Chris Armetta**  
Kenosha, WI

*While we'll probably disappoint you on points 2 and 3, we definitely have more plans for historically based articles this fall. The specifics aren't final, but history buffs should be delighted with them. In addition, keep an eye out for features and departments like "Giants in the Earth" for a little more focus on the heroes and legends of real-world history this summer.*

## Issue #266 Was Keen

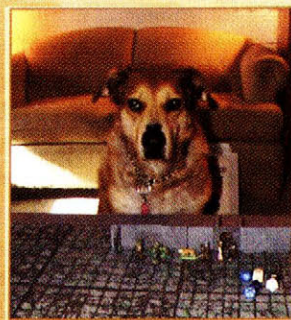
Seeing as you requested the opinions of your readers on your latest issue, I decided that I would give them. I've been reading *DRAGON Magazine* for over a year now, and I only regret not beginning sooner.

The "Dungeoncraft" column is just getting better and better. I've been creating a new campaign over the past few months and have found it very useful, particularly the advice for NPCs. The "Monster Maximizers" article was also good—I never knew so much about centaurs before. I found the "Arcane Lore" useful as well, if a bit specialized. As ever, the *ALTERNITY*® game section was good—I'm a particular fan of 50s B-movies, but it never occurred to me to convert some of them to the *ALTERNITY* game until now.

The only thing about *DRAGON Magazine* I am not content with is the overwhelming amount of new races being presented for PCs. They make interesting reading, but it is not likely to be of much use to any DM. Also, I feel that the articles could be becoming too reliant on supplements we might not have; "wu jen" and "shukenja" are just words to me, as I have no information on these classes. Maybe some sort of glossary would help?

## Player of the Month

As player of the month, I would like to nominate a friend that we all affectionately call Smudgie. He is a very dedicated gamer in that he has never missed a session in almost eight years. He also makes a point of always greeting everyone at the door and personally checking that they have plenty of food and drink for the evening. Once we have started gaming, he is very willing to provide sound effects such as the growling of monsters and the barking of gnolls, wolves, dogs, and werewolves.



**Smudgie**

He is also versatile in the characters he plays. He has played the part of a dog mount for a halfling, a bear companion for a ranger, two hunting dogs for a guide, and has even given roleplaying tips for a Lythari elf.

Supervision of the gaming group is another task he enjoys. If the sessions ever get too rowdy, he will jump right in and chastise everyone impartially until they calm down. When the game is over, he always makes a point of cleaning up after everyone. I never find any food on the furniture or floor. For dedication, hard work, versatility, and good nature, I feel Smudgie should be nominated for the Player of the Month.

—Kathy Kwolek

Anyway, these are just minor points. Keep up the good work, and hurry up with 3rd Edition!

**Richard Tongue**  
London, England

*Message received! We're backing off on the new races and classes, not just because we've done so many in the past few years but also because the advent of 3rd Edition makes them a bit problematic this year. We'll return to presenting new races and classes next year—just at a slightly more measured pace.*

*On the other hand, 3rd Edition introduces a terrific new concept, "the prestige class." While we can't tell you the details yet, rest assured that we'll explore the many options the concept makes available.*

*Another great thing about D&D this year is that the new edition makes rules references simple again!*

## No 3E for Me!

I recently read the blurb on the 3rd Edition rules that are set to come out next year. I came to the section on the optional rules, such as *Skills & Powers*, *Combat & Tactics*, and so on, and I couldn't help but feel a bit ripped off.

Why is Wizards of the Coast going to make these rules obsolete and incompatible with the 3rd Edition rules? I paid \$200 Australian for these rules, and I wanna use them, dammit! You say you are not trying to bilk us out of more money. I agree, but only because I have

been bilked already. Personally, I am boycotting the 3rd Edition rules. There is nothing wrong with the ones we have, especially after the revamping of the 2nd Edition. In fact, some of the worlds presented for the 2nd Edition were taking the game in new directions—the *RAVENLOFT*®, *PLANESCAPE*®, *BIRTHRIGHT*®, *DARK SUN*®, and—last but not least—*SPELLJAMMER*® settings, for example. I know, in my group, that these were more than popular; these were the bulwark by which we planned games. Why kill something so good?

Personally I've had enough of the *GREYHAWK*® setting, and while I read the *DRAGONLANCE*® novels, I rarely play a game in this setting. The only setting remaining in print that we come in contact with is the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* setting, and this is because it is home to several *SPELLJAMMER* characters.

I sat by and watched Kara-Tur die with the premier of the 2nd Edition, and I said nothing. You have taken away my beloved monk and barbarian character classes and changed both into something not worthwhile playing (with the possible exception of *The Complete Barbarians Handbook*), but I will not stand by and watch you kill the settings that have taken up so much of my gaming time. So down with the 3rd Edition!

**Mark Dunn**  
Ruse, New South Wales  
Australia

*Often we ignore these letters, assuming that most people realize that new editions don't spread a paper-eating virus that destroys older versions of the game—and that we can't persuade those who believe it otherwise. (Though if we could afford such a thing, no doubt we'd use it to bilk you out of even more money!)*

*In truth, we sympathize with those who fear the passing of their favorite settings. To learn that the campaign in which you've spent countless happy hours is no longer supported with new material can be disappointing. It can even blind you to the fact that no one can make you stop playing SPELLJAMMER if you enjoy it. (This summer, I'll run a 3rd Edition AL-QADIM® campaign,*

## I prefer articles that deepen existing rules and add flavor to campaigns ...

*using the 2nd-Edition sourcebooks and adventures with the new rules.)*

*The beauty of roleplaying games is that they're based on your imagination. Sourcebooks and campaign settings help you save time in creating a coherent world, but the game dies only when you stop playing it.*

*Here's our advice: Check out the 3rd Edition, maybe at the GEN CON Game Fair where there are seminars on creating your first character and converting your existing campaign world. Then, decide whether you like the 3rd Edition D&D game well enough to convert your campaign to the new rules.*

*We're betting you will—especially when you see how we've given you back your beloved monk and barbarian!*

### Hot for Elmore's Elf

I am not a veteran reader, for I started with issue #237, but I read enough to tell you my personal opinions about the magazine. My judgment on the various articles usually follows this simple rule: I prefer articles that deepen existing rules and add flavor (without numbers or dice rolling tables) to campaigns rather than those expanding rules with new spells and kits. Thus, my favorite part of the magazine is the "Dragon Ecologies" department. In fact, I think new monsters are nice and useful, but using creatively quirks and habits of good-old fashioned jermlaine or carrion crawlers is far better to add verve to a campaign.

On the other hand, I tend to skip new spells and magical items, though I think those articles make a nice little encyclopedia. It's great to pick up some weird stuff from them and throw it in as treasure instead of the usual boring longsword +1 or potion of invisibility. Characters waving strange items are amazing and memorable.

I find articles describing new PC races the most useful, however, because I like DMing PLANESCAPE campaigns, and having a gripli hero in your group really fits that extremely heterogeneous setting. The best article ever I can remember is "He's Got Personality" from issue #243 (maybe

because my first character was a paladin in a MYSTARA® campaign). That article was full of cool tips for both DMs and players.

I just read issue #267, and I enjoyed "By Any Other Name" (very useful—I love these kinds of articles), "Great Rewards," and "Denizens of the Underdark." "Alternate Underdark" was inspiring.

Finally, if artist Larry Elmore employed a model for the elf on the cover, please tell me her name, address, and phone number, 'cause I think I've found the girl I shall marry! Okay, okay, just kidding ... but not so much!

Lucas S.G. Betti  
Italy

### Comments on #267

I just received issue #267 in the mail and I wanted to share my thoughts on the magazine of late.

Overall, this issue was pretty good. I enjoyed the Underdark theme. It was nice to see Larry Elmore's work on the cover again. The "Countdown to 3rd Edition" features have been interesting, and I look forward to seeing what else is in store in the coming months.

I would like to see more world-specific articles or campaign journals for the various worlds, especially the GREYHAWK setting. I see Ed Greenwood has a new monthly feature, "The New

Adventures of Volo." While I am not a big Ed Greenwood fan, this installment was interesting. I would like to see a regular GREYHAWK feature in these pages, perhaps something akin to the Volo series. I think a regular feature would increase interest in the setting, which has not had a lot of new product releases lately.

I am happy to see that the GREYHAWK setting will be the default setting for the 3rd Edition game. I think this will return the game to its roots to some extent, even as the game gets a new look and feel. At the same time, I assume the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting will continue to be supported vigorously, so fans will still be able to have new products. For myself, I look forward to more GREYHAWK products, but I am wondering if new releases are on hold until after 3rd Edition debuts next summer. I don't see any GREYHAWK products in the "Coming Attractions" section, and I haven't seen anything on the website regarding new releases.

As far as the magazine is concerned, I enjoyed the "Dungeon Mastery" article "Great Rewards." These are the kinds of articles I use. It wasn't very long, but it had good ideas that can be used in a campaign. The ALTERNITY articles I don't use. "Knights of the Dinner Table" is a favorite, and the "Nodwick" on *Return to White Plume Mountain* was fun.

One other issue I would like to address is the long-gone "Roleplaying Reviews" feature. One of the letters in issue #267 asked for the return of this feature, and I would like to echo that sentiment. I understand the editorial response about competing with web-based reviews, but I still think there is a place in *DRAGON Magazine* for product reviews. In the past, the feature helped me make buying decisions about both TSR and non-TSR products, and I was sorry to see it go. I, for one, do not usually look at Web-based reviews, but I do subscribe to *DRAGON Magazine* and would like to see detailed product information in these pages. In the late 80s I bought the TALISLANTA game after reading the review in *DRAGON Magazine* and later went on to run several successful TALISLANTA tournaments at the GEN CON® game fair with my friends, so I think the reviews are a great way to get

people interested in games and products they might not have otherwise tried.

**Greg Hill**  
Address Withheld

*While the speed of the Web is one reason we aren't considering a return to game reviews, another is that we can't enjoy the appearance of objectivity, since we're part of the biggest roleplaying company. No matter how objective and fair our reviewers have been (which is impeccably fair, we think), we're always vulnerable to accusations of favoritism if they review Wizards of the Coast products—and we're shooting our parent company in the foot if we don't allow such reviews.*

*It's a Catch-22 that we'd love to overcome, but so far no one's presented a solution that satisfies everyone. Until then, we're happy to concentrate on the best part of working on a roleplaying magazine: stuff you can use in the game.*

## Balancing Act

I've been enjoying the sneak peeks at the 3rd Edition that you've been publishing each month, and this issue's article was no different. The cleric has always been one of my favorite classes, and it sounds like the changes in store for them are all very good. As I started studying the changes more closely, though, it became apparent that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

My first complaint is the "Gods of 3rd Edition" table. It shows that the gods have varying numbers of domains. Why? This was one of my main complaints about the published specialty clerics: no balance between the various

gods. Your 3rd Edition table shows some with as few as three, most with four, and one (Obad-Hai) with six domains! Granted, some domains might be worth less than others, but if they all have exactly one spell at each level and one granted power, how could they be that different? Add that to the fact that the actual article states that clerics get two domains, and now I'm totally confused and concerned.

Then I got to thinking about this one spell per level business. If I only get to choose from two spells per level (or three, four, or six), how are we assured that all clerics can "swap out" spells for healing spells? Does every domain include healing? I hope there is a pool of spells that all clerics can draw from. A sort of All domain that includes the turn/control undead power. If so, it isn't mentioned anywhere in the article.

There were also plenty of things I liked: "swapping" (which my group has been using for years), accelerated healing, every domain containing an equal number of spells, every domain having a spell for every level, combat enhancements, and the new turning rules the unevenness of the god's powers.

**Foy Burns**  
Lorena, TX

*Not to fret, Foy: Clerics choose two domains from those available from their deity. So while some gods offer more variety from which to choose, all clerics pick two domains for the bonus (domain) spells. They choose their regular spells freely, not from the domain spell lists.*

## Bookworms

I just finished reading The Underdark issue (#267), and I must say, well done.

From the wonderful cover (I would love to have that painting hanging on my wall—can it be purchased?), to the duergar city, to "Nodwick" and "KotDT," I was impressed. The only thing I could do without is the Marvel bit. I love the "Ecology" section, which is usually what I read first, but enough about that.

I have been reading *DRAGON Magazine* for about six years now, and I have noticed there are never any book reviews. If a reader sends in a well-written book review, will it be printed? Personally, I have one for you if you do. I recently read Troy Denning's *Beyond the High Road*, and I would love to share my opinion. On that note, I read nearly every book released and have opinions on them all. Do you need a critic?

**Jonathan Gibson**  
Detroit, MI

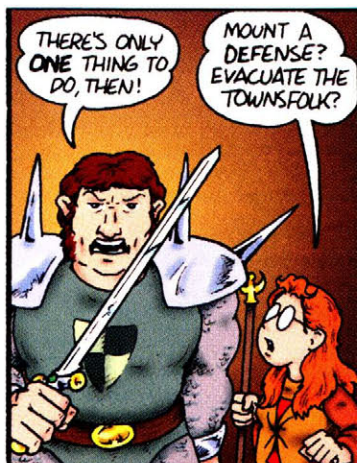
*We aren't sure if Larry's original painting is available for sale. We do know that he is planning to sell prints of the art. You can contact him through our web site <[www.wizards.com/dragon/](http://www.wizards.com/dragon/)>. Just click on "Friends of Dragon" to get to Larry Elmore's web site!*

*While we have no plans for a book review column, we do have something delicious in the works for bibliophiles. It's still in the planning stages, but keep an eye on issues this fall for recommended reading for gamers.*

*In the meantime, if you'd like to comment on fantasy fiction of interest to gamers, including your opinions on Wizards of the Coast books, please send your critiques in the form of a "DMail" letter. If it's interesting and not too long, we'll print it!*



By Aaron Williams



## Impertinent!

I've been a reader of *DRAGON Magazine* for about four years, and when my subscription ended, I did not really rush to renew it. In fact, I still have not renewed it. To be honest, the articles featured in your magazine are becoming less and less pertinent to what *anybody* would actually use in their game.

I would really like to see things that I would care about. I don't need strange new monsters or "Ecologies" of slime. I would like to see DM advice, possibly even a monthly installment where DMs can share their wisdom. I'd like to see roleplaying tips,

time. Maybe it'll help bring people away from the "What, you still use old rules?" comments. I've been playing for some twenty-three years, so I started with the original books and boxed sets. I was skeptical about 3rd Edition, but I like what was done with the cleric (as described in "Countdown to 3rd Edition" in issue #267), as I've allowed priests to use the weapon for their deity for a long time.

Keep up the good work.

Russ Junkin  
Mannheim, Germany  
rjunkin@bluewin.de

'soapbox' is a traditional form of communicating concerns to others, a time-honored tradition that should not be abandoned just because you object to the topic.

"Next, please note that you open your critique of my commentary on name-calling by calling it 'childish.' It seems that the bad habit I am speaking out against is pervasive in those who wish to be disagreeable.

"What is particularly offensive about the name-calling discussed in the editorial seems to have been overlooked by you. It isn't merely a matter of being insulted. It is about gamers as a group being denigrated by those supposedly there to serve them creatively. What sort of game products are likely to come from those who consider their audience as 'geeks' and 'nerds'?

"While it is admirable to desire to improve your roleplaying skills, there is much to discuss that might seem peripheral to that subject, but that bears directly upon gaming. The attitudes of gamers toward each other affect gaming as a whole. Thus, I have attempted to alert readers to such matters.

"Although the 'Up on a Soapbox' column will continue to deal with matters that aren't directly related to being a better DM or player, this is not to say I want to ignore such material. George, if you have any particular topic you would like to have me address, please pass it along to the editors of *DRAGON Magazine*. Good ideas are always welcome!" —Gary Gygax

## The articles ... are becoming less and less pertinent to what anybody would actually use in their game.

ways to make campaigns more interesting, or even story ideas. These things might seem basic, but they are the things that affect my game and those of most other gamers. They are the very core of the AD&D game, and if people can learn new takes on these important aspects of the game, then they can improve on all the other parts themselves. Please slow down with all the filler articles and discuss things that we really care about. I would like to see this magazine be as great as it possibly can and use its full potential!

Adam Karz  
Tarzana, CA  
Jetspeed13@aol.com

*Much of what you describe wanting to see sounds like "Forum," "Dungeoncraft," and "Dungeon Mastery," Adam, so we're at a loss to respond to much of your letter. However, during the transition from 2nd to 3rd Edition, and perhaps beyond, we're presenting a lot more idea-generator articles than we have in past. If you're looking for inspiration rather than strange new monsters, those will likely be your cup of tea.*

## Inspired To Write

I've been away from *DRAGON Magazine* for several years because I've been in Europe, but now I plan on buying the magazine regularly.

I was inspired by "Up on a Soapbox" by Gary Gygax (in issue #267). He touched on a subject that has been a problem here in Germany for a long

## Get Off Your Soapbox

What's up with "Up on a Soapbox"? It seems Mr. Gygax has nothing better to do than discuss name-calling among gamers. I can't speak for everyone, but name-calling and his reaction both seem quite childish.

As he stated in issue #268, most gamers are actually intelligent people. As intelligent people, name-calling is below most of us. Why would we want to read an article about how we are being called nerds, geeks, or worse? Being insulted is usually the result of someone attempting to make themselves appear above being insulted. If you are actually offended, maybe you actually feel as if you are below them. I let insults roll off like water on a duck. I know who I am and don't need anyone to tell me that I'm not what the name-callers are accusing me of being.

In my opinion, Mr. Gygax's past two articles were a waste of time and magazine space. I read *DRAGON Magazine* to enhance my roleplaying game and get fresh, new ideas.

Otherwise, I am quite pleased with your magazine. Keep up the good work!

George Fields  
426 W. 2nd St.  
Centralia, IL 62801

*Who better to reply than Gary himself? We passed along George's letter for this response:*

*"First I would like to point out that the*





# Convention Calendar

## April

### Egyptian Campaign 2000

**March 31–April 2**

Southern Illinois University,  
Carbondale, IL.

Contact: Egyptian Campaign 2000  
c/o SIUC Strategic Games Society  
Office of Student Development  
Carbondale, IL 62901-4425.

Email: ECGamCon@aol.com

Website: www.siu.edu/~gamsoc

### MegaCon 2000

**March 31–April 2**

Expo Center, Orlando, FL.

Contact: Beth Warden

4023 Tampa Rd.

Oldsmar, FL 34677.

Website: www.megaconvention.com

Email: beth@megaconvention.com

### URICON IX

**March 31–April 2**

Memorial Union, University  
of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI.

Contact: URICON IX

Attn: Neail Tanner

67 Upper College Rd.

Kingston, RI 02881.

Website: http://opus.acc.uri.edu/  
GamingClub/

Email: gameclub@etal.uri.edu

### Imagi-Con IV

**April 1**

Kehr Union Building,  
Bloomsburg University,  
Bloomsburg, PA.

Contact: The Role Playing Guild  
Box 8, Kehr Union Building  
Bloomsburg University  
Bloomsburg, PA 17815.

Email: bloomu\_rpg@yahoo.com

### Roundcon 2000

**April 7–9**

IL Travelodge Suites,  
Columbia, SC.

Contact: Roundcon 2000

1119 Flora Drive

Columbia, SC 29223-5222

Website: www.uscrtgs.org

### CODCON V

**April 14–16**

SRC 2800,

College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, IL.

Contact: James Allen.

Email: allenj@cdnet.cod.edu

### ImagineCon 2000

**April 20–23**

Virginia Beach Pavilion,  
Virginia Beach, VA.

Contact: John Prescott  
or Dennis Hanson.

Email: info@imaginecon.com

### OurCon 2000

**April 28–30**

UMass Campus Center, Amherst, MA.

Contact: OurCon

RSO 178-416 SUB

UMass, MA 01003.

Website: http://ourcon/tripod.com

Email: ourcon@hotmail.com

## May

### Fantasy Fair X

**May 21**

The Cresset Exhibition Centre,  
Peterborough, UK.

Contact: 5 Arran Close

Holmes Chapel

Cheshire

CW4 7QP

United Kingdom.

## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

**Warning:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2985 (U.S.A.).

**Important:** *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

- ❖ Australian convention
- \* Canadian convention
- European convention
- ☐ Online convention

Goblin (Go Blind)  
MIND BLAST Solution:

### LAIRE-CON

**May 12–14**

Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.

Contact: Adam Krat.

Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

### MISCON 2000

**May 26–28**

Double Tree Hotel Edgewater,  
Missoula, MT.

Contact: MISCON

P.O. Box 7721

Missoula, MT 59807.

### Tachy11Con

**May 26–29**

Presented by Cybertown,  
Missoula, MT.

Contact: Tachy11Con  
1271 Semoran Blvd., Suite 157  
Cassleberry, FL 32707.  
Website: [www.tacycon.com](http://www.tacycon.com)  
Email: [tachycon@scifispace.com](mailto:tachycon@scifispace.com)

## June

### LAIRE-CON

June 2-4  
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.  
Contact: Adam Krat.  
Email: [mayoraloe@aol.com](mailto:mayoraloe@aol.com)

### Milwaukee Summer Revel 4

June 15-18  
Sheraton Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI.  
Contact: Milwaukee Summer Revel  
P.O. Box 779  
New Munster, WI 53152.  
Website: [www.rli-net/~melka/msr/index.htm](http://www.rli-net/~melka/msr/index.htm)

## July

### LAIRE-CON

July 7-9  
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.  
Contact: Adam Krat.  
Email: [mayoraloe@aol.com](mailto:mayoraloe@aol.com)

### Patriot Games

July 13-16  
Holiday Inn Express,  
Fredricksburg, VA.  
Contact: David T. Darnell. Website:  
[www.VRPA.org/PatriotGames.html](http://www.VRPA.org/PatriotGames.html)  
Email: [David.Darnell@VRPA.org](mailto:David.Darnell@VRPA.org)

## August

### LAIRE-CON

August 11-13  
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.  
Contact: Adam Krat.  
Email: [mayoraloe@aol.com](mailto:mayoraloe@aol.com)

VA

### OOOOPS! File

Mind Flayer Mike Selinker was the first to spot two errors in the puzzles from issue #269, naturally enough. On page III, #13 has the clue "Look forward to," which should read "Looked forward to." That small mistake makes a big difference.

Also, the answer to the Mind Blast (on page 14) should be "Plus One Long Swords," or else you're left with an extra "s."

Our apologies to Mike and all those puzzlers who've been agonizing over the missing letters for the past month!

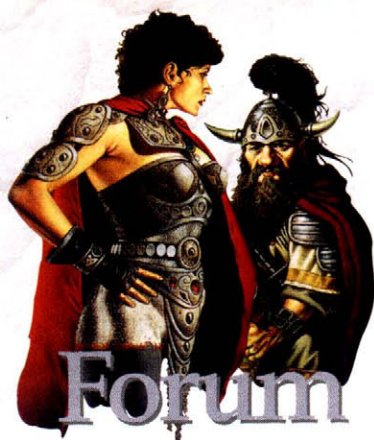


## MIND FLAYERS

by Mike Selinker

**E**ach of these *Player's Handbook* spells below is broken into two words, one outside the other. For example, DREAM might have a clue for DAM on the outside and RE on the inside. The shading shows the position of the interior words.

|    | EXTERIOR                  | INTERIOR                 |             |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1  | Arrive                    | Container for clothes    | <div></div> |
| 2  | Take to court             | Tit for _____            | <div></div> |
| 3  | Crooner Crosby            | Noisy clamor             | <div></div> |
| 4  | Crystal ball user         | Compulsory priest spell  | <div></div> |
| 5  | Each                      | Enfeeblement, for one    | <div></div> |
| 6  | "Golly!"                  | Young miss               | <div></div> |
| 7  | Combat                    | Mine contents            | <div></div> |
| 8  | Satiate                   | Songstress McEntire      | <div></div> |
| 9  | Gangland foe of Blood     | Hill insect              | <div></div> |
| 10 | Evaluate anew             | Producer Roddenberry     | <div></div> |
| 11 | Emulate a bard            | Finish                   | <div></div> |
| 12 | Offering, as to a charity | Note after do and re     | <div></div> |
| 13 | Crazy                     | Land in water            | <div></div> |
| 14 | Stone                     | Dish-inventing scientist | <div></div> |
| 15 | Placing a ball on a peg   | Comes to regret          | <div></div> |
| 16 | Have as a basis (2 words) | Proportional relation    | <div></div> |



## Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; [dmail@wizards.com](mailto:dmail@wizards.com). Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

**DOES YOUR CAMPAIGN HAVE A PARTICULAR THEME?  
IS IT SWASHBUCKLING, EPIC, GRITTY, OR WAHOO?  
TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN'S STYLE!**

### Another Thief Fan

With several writers giving the thief class some huge backing, I feel I should join in since it is one of my favorite classes to play. Like some previous writers, my group gives thieves five nonweapon proficiencies to start, then one every third level. We also let them use the priest's THAC0, though that use is limited to kits like the bounty hunter and adventurer. I also think that thieves should have a better chance to find secret and concealed doors.

I, however, would like to address another issue: the kits themselves. While the rest of *The Complete Thief's Handbook* is great, it seems like the author rushed through the most important part. It's amazing that the same company that produced *The Complete Bard's Handbook* left many thief kits void

create slightly more dangerous things, such as a pair of bracers with a firing mechanism to shoot quarrels or darts. In fact, I thought of so many possible benefits for the adventurer that I was thinking about making a different kit for each race, or having it be a "choose your benefits and hindrances from the lists" kit. In short, compared to the kits in the handbooks for bards and paladins, thief kits are kobolds, while bards and paladins are titans.

I would also like to address the new 3rd Edition rules. Mostly, I love them. I'm glad the level limits are gone, but I think you should keep the dual-class ability. Elves, in particular, are good for changing their minds about their job, so they should be able to change classes if they have the ability scores. I love the new exceptional Strength rule. I always

### Something To Fight Against

I recently concluded a ten-month campaign, the longest of my seventeen years playing the AD&D game. Imagine a DRAGONLANCE® campaign wherein two minotaur siblings are washed ashore and saved by two sea elves. Joining them is a battlerager dwarf who likes to eat bugs (I bought rubber ones) and finds one to his liking once in a while. All had histories that pointed them in the direction of fact-finding about a strange movement in the balance of the world. Then imagine a big, fat gypsy named Sheldon who manages to smuggle them out of town if they will dress up as freaks in his traveling circus.

Then an unusual gnome with an incredibly dangerous new "road maker" machine that requires "volunteers" uncorks the beginnings of a plot that draws them all together: Good blew it when the Kingpriest of Istar proved good's destructive power. Evil blew it with the excesses of the dragon wars. Guess who feels they need to restore a new order? That's right; the neutral gods and their agents are quietly planning an efficient coup via King Mermur's sea elf legions (thanks for the recent articles on that), and the heroes are the only ones in position to stop it.

The ingredient for success was that the players had something to play against, something personal to all of them for one reason or another. I had fun creating plot twists and opportunistic NPCs both good and evil. Playing against something does make a huge difference. Fighting for something is nice, but it is easier to keep a party together, happy, and focused if there is

**T**he ingredient for success was that the players had something to play against ...

of anything but a few free nonweapon proficiencies. I find it hard to believe that no special benefits were listed for the burglar and the smuggler, for example. (The cat burglar of the *Demihumans of the Realms* accessory would be a good standard kit, not just for demihumans.) Also, the assassin is no better at killing than any other thief. (Assassins should use the 1st Edition AD&D® assassination table.)

The adventurer kit could be the best of them all. My group revamped some of the kits, giving the adventurer a gadgeteering ability similar to the one for the cat burglar. My version can

hated that a character with a flat 18 had the same Strength-related proficiency checks as one with 18/00, even though the latter is vastly stronger.

In your article in issue #266 about the 3rd Edition art, that isn't a dwarven wizard on the bottom left, is it? I would hate it if racial class limitations were thrown away completely. I like the rationale that dwarves cannot be wizards and that only humans can truly be a paladin from start to finish. I love what I saw of the art so far, and I can't wait to see the dragons!

**Mark Anthony Sims**  
Pittsburgh, PA

an opposing force rather than just a cause for them to fight for. I'd like to have both, but if I had to choose, I'd prefer offering a target!

**Josef McCoy**  
Tumwater, WA

## Character Improvements

The reason I wrote is to respond to the "Question of the Month" and to Justice McPherson's letter from issue #267.

The latter first: Mr. McPherson, I like the idea you present and think it should apply not only to ability scores but also to nonweapon proficiencies, as well. A player whose character used a certain skill during an adventure, especially when the results were exceptionally good or beneficial (made several checks by ten or more, for example, or rolled several ones when making a check) should have a chance, even if only a small one, of getting to adjust his skill level in certain nonweapon proficiencies. The only problem I can see with your suggestions, and the reason I suspect that scores are so hard to raise in the game, are twofold.

One, given the various methods for character creation, your system has the potential to create extremely powerful characters in a relatively short amount of time, especially if, like me, you tend to rush characters through the first one or two levels. The second problem is, do you enforce the opposites? Do you take back these newly gained points if the character doesn't do anything to maintain/build on these skills? In your example, the computer geek would quickly return to his former state if he abandoned his workouts after being released from the military and returned to a sedate lifestyle. Also, as a linguist in the military, I can tell you that certain skills are extremely perishable. I think one of the reasons for setting character stats in stone is to save time bookkeeping and keep the players from constantly trying to justify a point increase after each level gained. Anyway, just some food for thought, really ... I think I am going to test your method with my group when our next campaign begins. Given all the modifiers, it is probably fairly balanced, but I think I will see.

On to my number two reason for writing: "High level" for my groups tends to be between 9th and 13th. Being in the military, I have a fairly high turnover rate in my group, and I hate trying to incorporate a new 10th-level character into my group—I usually just start over if we have reached levels that high. I tend to rush my players through the first level or two, as the slight increase in hit points and abilities tends to give them confi-

I know my idea of high level is probably ridiculously low for some, and I do like to DM much more powerful characters. My whole problem lies in the dramatic increase in bookkeeping when characters attract followers.

I would be interested in what others have to say on the topic.

**Jason Bartlett**  
Harrogate, North Yorkshire  
United Kingdom  
Bartletts4@aol.com

**B**eing evil doesn't mean you have to be stupid, nor does it mean that you lack moral character.

dence and we usually spend the first few adventures setting up the scene the players are living in, anyway. I do a lot of work to ensure that my player's characters have a vested interest in the places they call home, and once I have allowed them to establish some roots and get to know a place, the level gain slows down a bit, and we work more on story and long term goals. The real reason I tend to keep my characters in the 4th–8th-level range for as long as possible without causing boredom and frustration is that my players rarely use hirelings or henchmen. I am not sure if this is something I subconsciously discourage or if it is just a tradition that carries over from group to group as members change in ones and twos and the habits of the old group carry on. In either case, when characters make high enough levels in my campaigns that their names are recognized, the poor players rarely know what to do with the followers. I ran a group through *Night Below* last year (great adventure!), and after they succeeded in winning the final battle and the dust had settled, they were all in the 11th–14th-level range, had disgusting amounts of wealth and little to do with it, so they got together and decided to establish a city. Unfortunately, half the party moved to Australia or America before the foundation could be built, and we moved on to another campaign with a new group, all of whom are about 4th–5th level right now.

## Turn to the Dark Side

I'd like to retort to the letters by Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Smith from issue #267, in which they comment on my original letter from issue #264. Both of them are effectively saying that evil can work by creating a party of predominately lawful evil characters. I don't disagree with this idea. Obviously, if you have a party in which most of the characters are of the same alignment, they'll probably get along great. At least one would hope they would, especially with a party of mostly lawful characters as Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Smith describe.

It seems that the point of my original letter was missed, though. I am arguing that it is possible run an evil character in a predominately good party and still have the campaign function well. My neutral evil elfen thief/mage is running in a party with a lawful good dwarven fighter, a lawful neutral priest of Helm, a neutral good priest of Mystra, and a neutral good human fighter.

How is this possible? First of all, none of the other player characters need to know that you are running an evil PC. Being evil doesn't mean you have to be stupid, nor does it mean that you lack moral character. Evil characters are not two-dimensional. From my perspective, the fine line between good and evil is the belief that ends justify the means. Believe it or not, evil characters are still capable of having things such as loyalty, honesty, honor, and integrity. This is the

reason why evil characters can function with other members of the party, even if they are good. The evil character doesn't necessarily have evil intentions towards the other people in the party; the PC could even be friends with the good characters and subscribe to the same goals as the rest of the party. An evil character can want to save the world as much as a good character; the difference is in the ways they believe it should be done.

people in the campaign; the difference comes when you examine the evil characters' methods and intentions. Evil characters need to be played as three-dimensionally as any other type of character. They need depth and motivations as complex as any PC. Hopefully this letter will make some gamers reevaluate their views of how evil characters should be played.

Matthew Avery  
Berkeley, CA

## Characters don't have to be locked into alignment stereotypes.

The simplest example is encountering a person who is a potential enemy; a good character might try to parlay with the person, whereas the evil character might indiscriminately kill the person. Does this have to cause party conflict? Not necessarily. Because the characters trust each other, they each understand that they have to let the other people in the party handle a situation in their own way when appropriate. It's like time-sharing the leadership position in the group. Every so often, a situation occurs where the other characters might not approve of the actions of my evil character. Despite this, the other party members will still accept the evil actions, either by turning a blind eye or just trusting the judgment of my evil character. If my character were in that situation and forced to justify his actions to the rest of the party, I'd simply tell them that parlaying would have been a waste of time, that they should be using their time to (insert party goal here). Of course, for all this to work, overtly evil actions must be hidden from the party. Evil characters that moonlight as assassins should probably hide that fact from any paladin in the group.

The main message I'm trying to convey is that characters don't have to be locked into alignment stereotypes. Characters are allowed to have open minds and don't have to condemn anyone of differing alignment. Evil characters don't always have to strive toward evil goals. They can be on the same good missions as the other

### Martial Arts Not Worth a Hoot

A few issues back there was some discussion on the use and practicality of martial arts in the gaming milieu. Although martial arts might have many uses in espionage and other modern campaigns, the reality is that in a traditional D&D setting with monsters that can easily overpower a character with either brute strength, natural armor, and magical powers and weapons, the most fearsome threat to a martial artist is a touch-based attack. No fighter worth his or her fighting experience would willingly get within touch range of a creature's most powerful attacks just to subdue the fiend. As someone who has studied martial arts, I am always searching for a practical system to introduce into the game but have yet to find a workable solution. The following is some sample dialogue from my GM (Lt. Ben McFarland ... a good candidate for GM of the Month!) and his reaction to this exact discussion within our gaming group. I believe that the last two sentences sum up the argument quite well, but getting to them is fun in and of itself.

A conversation between the GM and the Martial Arts Master [MAM]:

**GM:** Here comes the troll, large and gibbering. It holds a long leg bone in its hands. It squawks something unintelligible, but the blood on its talons speaks volumes. With a hungry gleam in its eye, it advances on you.

**MAM:** I'm going to try disarming it with my first two attacks. (Rolls.) Yes! A 20! I get an additional attack, right?

**GM:** (Nods.)

**MAM:** I'll use the disarmed bone to try sweeping the troll! (Roll.) Yes! An 18! It has to save or fall to the ground.

**GM:** (Rolls.) It falls. Then it looks at you with those dark black eyes and snarls—showing its foul, brown teeth. It rears back with both legs and kicks you ... (rolls) ... for 9 points of damage ... (rolls) ... knocking you to the ground. With its second attack, it grabs you with one of those lanky arms and ... (rolls) ... digs its claws into the flesh beneath your tunic, pulling you close to the fetid stink of its mouth for ... (rolls) ... 6 points of damage. Finally it growls and bites you ... (rolls, winces, shakes head) ... in the neck for triple damage.

You suffer 15 points of damage and are bleeding for 2 hit points a round. Roll for initiative.

Or ...

**GM:** The wyvern crashes through the ceiling, steam coming from its nostrils in snorts, its pale yellow eyes scanning the room. It howls deafeningly while its wings flap and its tail snakes around its body. Its powerful talons dig into the fractured tile.

**MAM:** I'll do a flying kick at the beast's knee. (Rolls.) Yes! A 17, so ...

**GM:** You leap at the wyvern, undaunted by its roar. Your kick lands solidly on the joint, and you feel the cold hard scales on your sole. Its a hard blow, and the wet crackle you hear is your own as something pops in your ankle and you fall on the sharp shards of fractured clay and stone. You take ... (rolls) ... 7 points of damage.

Or ...

**GM:** The ghouls clamber out of the hole, their teeth coated in blood and bits of flesh hanging from their talons. They hiss and sniff the air, and then hoot in a chilling cry as they look right at you in the shadows. Both of them charge your position, their blood-soaked feet leaving footprints on the cobbles.

**MAM:** I'll try a high split kick and try to take them both out at once. That's a -3 modifier to the second kick, yes? OK ... (rolls) ... Yes! A 17 and a ... 20!

**GM:** OK, the first ghoul nearly spins around, his head turned at an obscene angle. His companion staggers back, a few teeth missing from his mouth, his nose obviously broken. Roll a d20.

**MAM:** What for? Um, ok ... a 13.

**GM:** As you try to land, you feel a cold numbness spread through your legs and up your spine—a freezing bitter cold that locks your muscles and causes you to land hard on the stone. (Rolls.) You take 1 point of damage.

**MAM:** That's not so bad. So I've got a penalty?

**GM:** You're paralyzed. The ghoul looks at you hungrily and advances, placing a claw across your eyes ...

These are just some thoughts. I mean, heck, you've never run into ogres, trolls, ghouls, or any of those ugly fantasy monsters. They'd be reserved for those hard, last moments, those final battles, right? Let's not even consider creatures like umber hulks, night hags, wights, or gargoyles. Sure, you might be able to mess up a giant spider by kicking out a leg or an eye, but in the long run, even it's going to turn you into a juice box. Hydras? Manticores? Giant crabs? Ha! Not without armor, which is what it would take to do the martial art correctly. Padded armor isn't really much in the way of armor, people. It's just wrapping on the monster's candy bar.

Facing off against gnolls, zombies, orcs, or even the occasional hobgoblin, you might even earn some points for style. But against anything more fantastic than that, I'm going to clean you up with a little squeegee and put you in a bucket for the cleric to consider communing with to get some practice talking with spirits. You won't be long for the solo adventure world unless you spend as many nonweapon proficiency slots in Running and Sprinting as you did in martial arts. With a pack of adventuring friends you might last a bit

longer, but you'll be about as much dead weight as a 2nd-level mage and about as much of a healing sink.

Let it go. Maybe make a chart for your barroom brawls and altercations with drunken stable boys, vagrants, and town guards. For anything else, get yourself a lumpy metal thing +2, some solid armor, and a shield and go to town, because that's all that's going to save your hide from being a meal.

If guys try to walk the world like Caine from *Kung Fu*, I'll put their life expectancy at about three weeks. That should be enough for a pack of wolves to decide that the funky dancing man is really a meat popsicle in disguise. Yup, martial arts are wonderful for dealing with your common man, but plain stupid for your adventuring punk without a weapon of some kind to resort to first.

**Brian A. Morgan-Armstrong**  
Los Angeles, CA

**P**added armor isn't really much in the way of armor, people. It's just wrapping on the monster's candy bar.

### 3E Concerns

There are a couple of areas that concern me about the 3rd Edition rules. For the most part, my reaction is neutral, since my campaign goes its own way.

The first issue is the priest. I wish somebody would clarify this class—or should I say, mess—in the 3rd Edition rules. I like the idea of specialty priests, the priest's spell compendiums, the crusader, the druid, the mystic, and I almost like the monk. The main problem, though, is the chaos surrounding the specialty priest.

As presented in *The Complete Priest's Handbook*, the specialty priest is a pathetic weakling compared to the specialty priests in the *Powers & Pantheons*, *Demihuman Deities*, and *Faiths & Avatars* books for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. Neither seems to me to deserve the same experience point table as the basic cleric, and certainly the druidic table suggested in *Faiths & Avatars* fails in two areas. First, the experience requirements are too low for these high powered monstrosities. Second, the druidic experience point table reflects

the unique organization of the druidic church as described in the *Player's Handbook*. Don't get me wrong, I love those FORGOTTEN REALMS monstrosities but can't allow them in my campaign without putting them on the paladin and ranger experience chart. At the same time, the *The Complete Priest's Handbook* version seems to merit the thief's experience table more than that of the cleric.

Another problem I have is a lack of campaign-specific material relating to powers and specialty priests. I run my campaign with deities taken largely from the old *Deities & Demigods* book, but I don't have a lot of time to come up with a bunch of specialty priest profiles. I would love to see an updated *Deities & Demigods* type volume with suggested specialty priests for specific deities. I would also love to see an expanded revamping of priest spheres,

allowing better tailoring of specialty priests with specific spheres such as "love," or "shadow," or "hunting," and so on, as well as the modified old ones.

Finally, I have long placed multipliers on demihumans for experience points from  $\times .5$  to  $\times .95$ , not allowed them exceptional ability bonuses, and severely relaxed the dual classed requirements and restrictions for humans in an effort to give players more of a reason to play humans. I have always hated strict level limits, anybody telling me what class combinations I can allow, and the creation of super monstrosity PC races for the price of a plain old human, but I must say that as a gamer since 1980, I'm a bit leery of throwing all the floodgates wide open. In the long run it is all up to the DM anyway, but I hope some warnings, caveats, and wise suggestions are included in the new edition if the floodgates really are to be thrown wide open.

Can you tell I love this game?

**Victor P. Archer, Jr.**  
Columbia, SC



# Sean Reynolds

by Stephen Kenson

**S**ean Reynolds is a nice guy. His girlfriend says so. His friends and co-workers say so. Even Sean says he's a nice guy. "I think it's my purpose in life to help people," he says.

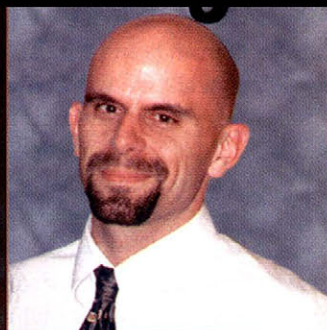
So how is it that Sean is involved in creating some of the nastiest monsters, villains, and all-around bad guys for products like *The Scarlet Brotherhood*, *The Green Goblin's Guide to Crime*, and the new *MONSTER MANUAL™* book for the 3rd Edition *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®* game?

It could be his childhood. Sean was born in Chula Vista, California and grew up there. (Maybe Chula Vista is near a hellmouth or something.) Or it could be gaming, which we all know leads to evil and corruption. Sean was introduced to *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game (the red Basic Set and the blue Expert Set) in 1980 by his cousin. He quickly graduated to playing the AD&D® game. Like many evil geniuses, he clearly started young.

## Webmaster to Game Designer

Sean began working for Time Warner Interactive in 1994 to develop their America Online and websites. A year later, Sean joined TSR as their Online Coordinator. "I had two goals: to get TSR a website, and to change the company's then-restrictive online policy to something more reasonable."

Sean moved to Washington when TSR was purchased by Wizards of the Coast and found his goals as Online Coordinator fulfilled by Wizards'



Even scary bald guys can be nice.

### Alignment?

I like to think of myself as lawful good, but I drift into lawful neutral. I think everyone has a purpose in life.

### Favorite roleplaying game?

*DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* 3rd Edition. I can't say how happy I was to start working on my first 3E project. This is the best game we've ever produced.

### Favorite product you've worked on?

*The Scarlet Brotherhood*.

### Favorite 3E character class?

It's a toss-up between fighters and wizards. Both classes are neat enough in 3E that I really want to play them.

### Favorite game product?

The 1st-Edition *DUNGEON MASTER®* Guide. There's just so much in that one book.

### Favorite D&D® monster?

The many neat, underused monsters like carrion crawlers or otyugh.

### Favorite villain?

Blackwolf from Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards*. He really knew how to use propaganda.

### Favorite hero?

Taran the Wanderer from Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain* series. He starts out as a nobody and sacrifices so much to save the world he loves. That's my idea of a true hero.

### If you could have one superpower ... ?

Since I claimed to be lawful good, I guess I can't say "mind control." I'll go with "bulletproof skin."

### Favorite gaming food?

I've got a pretty bad sweet tooth, so it's candy, especially *STARBURST* jellybeans.

pre-existing website (which later incorporated TSR's games as well) and the company's much more open online policy. "My work was done," Sean says. So he applied for a job in the company's R&D division as a game designer, a job that allowed him free reign to create bad guys.

"I never expected to actually work for a game company," Sean says innocently. "Gaming has been a hobby since I was ten, and it's just great to come into work and be part of the community in a professional way. I mean, I get paid to make games. It's every gamer's dream. It's great to walk down the hall and run into Jeff Grubb, whose products I remember reading when I was twelve years old. It took me a while to stop walking down the hall doing double-takes."

## Super Heroes and Villains

As a designer, Sean has worked on a number of products for major roleplaying game lines. His most recent credits include *Beyond Science: A Guide to FX* for the *ALTERNITY®* game, *The Green Goblin's Guide to Crime* for the *MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Adventure Game*, and portions of the 3rd edition *MONSTER MANUAL* book.

*Beyond Science* began as a pet project for Sean's own *ALTERNITY* super-hero campaign. "When we started working on *ALTERNITY*, I was interested in expanding the FX rules. Since I'd already started doing the work, I convinced the Powers That Be to let me write the book." Sean currently runs an *ALTERNITY* super-hero game, using the rules he devised.

Speaking of super-heroes, *The Green Goblin's Guide to Crime* is written as an underground publication by Spider-Man's arch-foe, telling other criminals how it's done. It has dozens of crime scenarios—from bank heists to taking over Manhattan—and how to handle

# How does a nice guy create so much evil?

them "the smart way," making it a great resource for Marvel Narrators.

"It was a really neat project because it's one thing to write about crimes and people being evil and another to write about them from the perspective of someone who is evil." This from a self-proclaimed "nice guy"?

## Perfecting the 3rd Edition Monster

Sean's work on the 3rd Edition

*MANUAL* began the process of redefining many of the D&D game's best known creatures, along with introducing some new ones. "I'm doing most of the core humanoids," Sean says.

One goal of the 3rd Edition is to provide monsters that highlight the abilities of the various character classes. "For example, bards can use their music to counteract the powers of creatures that use sonic attacks," Sean says, "but there are only two or three creatures like that in the game, so it came off as a kind of useless ability. We're adding creatures that give characters a chance to use those special abilities." Sean's contribution to the effort is the Krenshar, a mysterious creature that falls under the category of "things that cause fear." Paladins, start sharpening those swords!

## Fun With Evil Geniuses

Working on so many evil creatures and bad guys might have warped someone else's psyche, but not Sean's. "I've had to think a lot about villains," he says.

"I've studied abnormal psychology as a hobby, and I draw on parts of psychological lore to drive villains. For example, the Scarlet Brotherhood is made up of racial supremacists who believe in oppressing everyone else. They're real Nazi-types. With the Green Goblin it's more about his intelligence, he's this mad genius, obsessed with killing Spider-Man."

For Sean, intelligence is a key quality in a villain. He describes many villains as "bumbling and incompetent" and strives for intelligent bad guys. "I want the villains to win sometimes," he says. "Otherwise, they're not really much of a threat. The best sort of villain is the one who's intelligent and aware. Anyone can come up with a stupid villain. The smart villain is the one who thinks ahead, plans, and anticipates his enemies. They're more of a challenge, and more fun."

As a designer, Sean works to make the products he writes as fun and useful as possible. "I try to include something for everyone. In a dungeon full of combats I throw in some political intrigue and roleplaying, and vice versa, so everyone who reads the book can take something from it." Appealing to a broad spectrum of gamers and campaigns is a challenge, and it isn't always successful, but Sean likes to remind people that their best game resource is their own imagination.

"No matter what other people do, either in print or in their own games, it doesn't have to change your game.

Your game is unique. It shouldn't be dependent on anyone else's concept of what a roleplaying game should be."

See? We told you he was a nice guy.



## Credits

*Children of the Night: Ghosts  
The Star Cairns (GREYHAWK)  
The Crypt of Lyzandred the Mad  
The Scarlet Brotherhood  
Against the Giants: The Liberation of Geoff*

*Beyond Science: A Guide to FX  
Slavers (available now)  
Cloak and Dagger (May 2000)  
The Green Goblin's Guide to Crime (late 2000)  
3rd Edition MONSTER MANUAL (October 2000)*



# Hack & Slash

By Gary Gygax

Only dullards, and munchkins of course, would dream of playing such vapid stuff as combat-oriented games. Can you imagine *fighting* as a part of a *roleplaying* game? Why, that's not roleplaying at all.

This opinion is voiced with zealous certitude or languid self-assurance by many "mature" and "sophisticated" advocates of "real" roleplaying gaming. Unless you are telling or being told a story, then you aren't roleplaying at all. If on the surface this seems reasonable to you, think again. Such assertion is close-minded, bigoted, and completely without merit. Consider this: If you are playing the role of a warrior, what is more natural than being involved in weaponplay? As

a rogue, you likewise will be doing at least a little of like work. It then follows that priests and mages associated with those who fight a lot are destined to be assisting in the swordplay with their "sorcery."

As a matter of fact, a highly important segment of the fantasy literature genre is called "swords-and-sorcery" because it features the very sort of action and adventure theme that is decried as "hack-and-slash" by the detractors. These persons, feigning some superiority because they happen to prefer another focus in their gaming, ignore this fact entirely. What these *twits* are claiming is that unless you agree with what they like, you are childish and immature, possibly even a lack-wit. Well, I used the term "twits" advisedly, because those people are definitely twerpish in their

thinking. To decry action-based RPGs as being "immature" or not actually "roleplaying" is foolish in the extreme. It is as if they were saying that, because they prefer some other style of fantasy fiction, the swords-and-sorcery segment of the genre is unworthy and false.

Utter rubbish, of course.

To hammer this point home, the original RPG was inspired by the very sort of writing that the "mature" and "sophisticated" cult of roleplaying gamers seek to denigrate. By ridiculing hack-and-slash games, they are also belittling the writing of such authors as Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, and a host of other authors who were not "above" the writing of swords & sorcery yarns. Of course, there is more than combat in such novels,

**The sort of  
roleplaying one enjoys  
is a matter of taste,  
not of much else.**

but there is no escaping the fact that the fighting is the key element of these works. So too the roleplaying campaign with a focus on combat. The amount of combat in a campaign is not a measure of maturity, advanced thinking, evolutionary conceptualization, or lofty intellect. Preferring to tell stories actually might be likened to kids' "Let's Pretend" games or adolescents sitting around a campfire making up tales to amaze and frighten the other listeners. As I said, it might be, especially by those outside the hobby who think the whole exercise less than interesting and appropriate. The sort of roleplaying one enjoys is a matter of taste, not of much else.

While it is possible to point a finger at the *twit* who attempts to belittle your preferred form of gaming, note that

"hack-and-slash" and "swords-and-sorcery" are virtually synonymous, and that form of fantasy is indeed epic and worthy—as is your campaign—and that the pseudo-sophisticate is immature and precious for attempting to so criticize. While you might state that you find amateur theatrical performances tedious, even a complete bore, it is better to be more circumspect. Suggesting that taste is individual and that the bases for roleplaying allow a wide variety of approaches, all equally valid, conveys a more cogent defense of your own preferences. It also carries an implied superiority of reasoning capacity. This is good, for more likely than not, the critic holds a quaint concept, the notion that the non-combat-oriented form of the game he or she espouses is better than yours; thus he or she is your intellectual superior. A well-couched retort is likely to disabuse the detractor of that fond assumption. What? This benighted hack-and-slasher isn't a simpleton? (Now who am I going to feel superior to?)

You needn't have my validation, either, to feel comfortable enjoying a campaign that relies on a lot of action—weaponplay and magical assault on fell opponents. It is heroic, epic, and has been a keystone of fantasy since the genre was created who knows when. It is only the narrow-minded and opinionated who deem their own preferences to be elevated above the "ordinary" that think to establish their "greater intellect" thus. A pity, that lot, for they show quite the opposite.

In closing, and speaking of dullards, did you know that there is a vocal segment of the industry that believes you are but average of intellect, possibly not even that? Come back next issue, and we'll talk about this ...

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awkril was gasping in pain, the sound almost drowned out by horrible gnawing noises. Craer struggled desperately to roll away from the wet and dead weight on top of him.

He had to get to his friend in time . . .

He was free! Rolling to his feet, Craer stumbled and fell onto his knees as the ground shook, and something large and dark blotted out the moonlight. It loomed over the struggling forms of Hawkril and the wolf and a massive stone sword swung ponderously up—by the Three, a knight of stone!—and then down, ringing sparks from ornamental stones set in a floral planting. Hawkril was a handwidth away from that descending blade . . . but the wolf that had savaged him was thrashing and sagging on the ground, cut cleanly in two.

Craer was sprinting by then, dodging past the rising stone sword to pluck at his groaning friend. "Up! Up and *run!*" he gasped. "Run, you thick-headed swordswinger!"

Hawkril swayed to his feet, made a sort of a sob, and stumbled out of the floral bed into a staggering, lumbering run, the procurer at his elbow urging and tugging.

"Come on, come on, hurry, come *on* . . ." Craer glanced back at the stone guardian, and saw it striding after them, sword raised, staring stone eyes blank. If he was wrong about the magic that moved it, the lives and careers of Craer Delnbone and Hawkril Anharu bid fair to be soon over. The open moonlight of the

gardens was close ahead, now, and he'd find out soon enough . . .

Was it ever soon enough to die?

They were out, gasping, into the moonlight, with the tattered leaves of a last bush whirling around them, and a tranquil fountain ahead. Craer caught at Hawkril's arm as the armaragor staggered sideways, cursing, and risked a look back—just as the knight took a step out into the open.

It did not freeze, as he'd hoped it would.

"Hawkril," he hissed, "there's a statue yonder! Get around the other side of it—use it as a shield!"

Shards kissed the heels of the staggering armaragor, goading him into a stumbling run, and almost beheaded a desperately-diving procurer. Craer rolled, spitting out dirt and carefully-groomed grasses, finding his feet again with the patiently-striding stone knight close behind him.

He did a little dance for it, weaving away from the statue he'd seen—some Lord Silvertree waving his sword at the stars to make the stallion beneath him rear—to be sure it didn't follow Hawkril yet. The stone face never looked at him, and the stone eyes stayed blank . . . but its shoulders turned toward the and its blade rose again to smite.

This would be a slim, deadly chance—but slim, deadly chances were all they had just now . . . were all they'd had for some time.

The stone knight's blade rose again, and fell. It didn't have to be fast, if a foe couldn't flee. One strike of that stone sword—as large and as heavy as a horse—would kill even someone as large as Hawkril. It would probably reduce Craer Delnbone to bloody pulp, not even worth the bother of burial.



Stone whistled down, and Craer leaped for his life.

The ground trembled dully behind him—very close behind him—and then he was sprinting through the moonlight.

The procurer swarmed up the stone. He saw Hawkril peering up at him as he reached the horse's head and saw the stone knight bearing down on him.

Its sword was rising. If there wasn't some way to knock its head off, they were probably doomed—unless Craer could get it to fall over the statue somehow. He stood above it on his sculpted perch, waiting tensely. He'd only have one chance to leap.

Its sword swept around in a chop that rang off the statue's sword. He let the stone sword go past, and then onto the knight's shoulder, clawing at its head.

No, there was no seam here, and no wobbling weakness. It might have been a living man, it felt so alive. Alive, and as solid as stone—and he was going to die, here and now, as the stone sword swept back again to shear him off the knight's head.

At the last instant Craer swung himself around the far side of the head and dropped, clinging by his fingertips. The knight smote itself hard on the head, and Craer's world rocked.

Brief lightnings crackled through his fingertips, raging over the curved stone, and the procurer fell away, pain stabbing through him in a rush that left him unable to even cry out. Far above him, the dark bulk of the knight swayed, blotting out the moon, and then started to fall, in a dark and looming rush he knew he could not escape . . .

A strong arm snatched him by one elbow and

threw him into a flowerbed.

"Can't you keep out of tr—" Hawkril snarled, before the deep, ground-shaking crashes began, drowning out whatever else the swordmaster was trying to say. The knight's fall threw Hawkril helplessly up into the air, and in the moonlight Craer saw his tumbling friend arch in silent agony before a different part of the flowerbed swallowed him.

And silence, after ponderous pieces of stone stopped rolling, finally fell.

Craer rose into a low, tense crouch, keeping his eyes on the shattered knight, but its parts did not move again, and he let out his breath in silent thanks as he peered all around, seeking running wolves or armored figures or other guardians . . . and finding blessed nothing.

Hawkril asked, "Well, shall we press on? By now she's either up and waiting for us, or she's deaf . . ."

Craer lifted his lip in a mirthless grin and led the way through a still and coldly beautiful succession of paths, lawns, bowers, and little arched bridges over ponds. If the Lady of Jewels had only her ears to rouse her, and not the promptings of magic, Hawkril might be wrong . . . and they just might live to see another morning.

The westernmost outcropping of the Castle stretched away along the wall out of sight, in a series of towers and buttresses and balconies that looked for all the world like some great and many-legged stone beast sprawling asleep along the ground. In front of them, its grim gray stone launched out into space in a trip of slender hanging bridges that led to the Lady Turret, built of ivory stone to house the many wives of a long-dead Lord Silvertree . . . and now the home, it was said, of the Lady of Jewels.



The two intruders reached their shadows at last and held still for a long time, looking and listening for any sign of sentries or something stirring.

Craer plunged his hands to his belt, drew his sodden tunic up to his armpits, and began to unwind what looked like ridged armor from around his midriff. It was a long, dark, waxed cord, and it piled up in a coil by his. As Hawkril watched, the procurer went up the wall with the slow, deliberate ease of a master climber. After a moment or two came the ripple along the cord that told the armaragor to start climbing.

It was a long way in the bright moonlight to that third balcony, and Hawkril was breathing heavily when he crouched down beside Craer. The procurer put his mouth to Hawkril's ear and breathed, "I mislike the look of all these doors. A simple cord-and-bells would serve as a night alarm, with never a spell needed."

Hawkril looked at the row of balcony doors. They were little more than ornate metal frames set with glass, with closed draperies behind them forming an endless dark wall veiling all view of any treasures—or guards—within. He shrugged and muttered, "You're the procurer. Whither on, then?"

Craer pointed at a small, shuttered window along the wall, a good way out above a sheer drop. Hawkril rolled his eyes and then smiled, shrugged, and made a 'be my guest' gesture. The thief surged along the balcony like a shadow in a hurry, bent double to keep below the height of its parapet, and without hesitation swarmed along the wall, finding holds with uncanny ease and in eerie silence.

Clinging to the wall with his fingertips, Craer reached the shutters and pulled ever so gently,

first on one and then the other . . . only to find them both fastened firm. He glanced down for the first time, checking on what lay below, and then reached for the top of the shutters, clung, and slowly shifted his weight onto them.

The procurer hung there like a patient spider for a moment, drawing a knife from a sheath along his forearm. Hawkril watched him run it up the crack where the shutters met with slow care—and then, as it lifted an unseen hook fastening within, saw the shutter Craer was still holding onto swing inexorably open under his weight, heading for a crash against the wall.

The procurer shifted his body during that brief journey so that his shoulders took the impact with the wall. The silence was uncanny—and Hawkril saw Craer grimace in pain before the procurer heaved, swung his legs up . . . and vanished into the tower.

No lamps were lit, but the procurer could see enough to tell there was a table in front of him, in a long and narrow chamber whose walls all held curtained archways. Spindles of thread stood on shelves to his left; shears hung on a wallboard to his right. This must be a sewing and fitting room—and that shape across the room was no guard, but a dressmaker's wooden lady.

Well and good. A gentle, spicy aroma of mingled scents was already telling Craer he'd entered the chambers of a lady of high station. He perched on the sill, listening and looking and deducing, until he'd decided where best to proceed.

Craer crouched in the shadows beside the table for another silent eternity, listening, and then crept catlike toward one of the archways. Parting the curtain with his knife, he peered. Ah, he'd guessed right: beyond lay a robing room. And *what* a robing-room!



Fanlights above the draperies allowed faint moonlight into the chamber and by its blue-white glow he could see a low, ornate wardrobe whose glossy top displayed a row of wooden heads—all of them sporting sparkling tiaras, dangling clusters of gleaming earrings, or finely-graven metal masks. Hooks on the walls and harnesses hanging on chains from the ceiling all held gowns. Scores—nay, hundreds—of vivid and stylish garments, all of them glistening with the cold fire of gems!

Cascades of gems, clusters and swashes and swirls, thumb-sized here and larger there, never lone stones or paltry trios . . . zelosters and blackamarls and even a starbust brooch as big as his hand, adorned with the rarest gems of all: the rainbow-hued, glistening teardrops known as scarmareenes. By the Lady's Horns, what riches!

Craer took a handful of gowns, wrapped them around his arm, and turned with infinite care, careful not to make a sound that might bring—

Blue fire snapped out of the darkness without warning, the fire of a spell that smashed into him, searing and piercing, and drove him reeling across the room in a numbed, gasping dance of agony.

Wreathed in lightning, the procurer staggered through a row of gowns and another curtained archway beyond, into a chamber where Hawkril must be crouching outside. With his last sobbing strength, Craer ran into the curtains and tore at them, bringing them down.

Hawkril rose out of his crouch, sword in hand, and gaped through the glass at his writhing friend and the crawling, flickering radiance that was killing him. He snarled and swung his sword with all his might at the balcony.

Glass sang and screamed into shards, guardian spells shattered in sighing silver smoke and sparkling dust, and the armaragor charged through the ruin into the room.

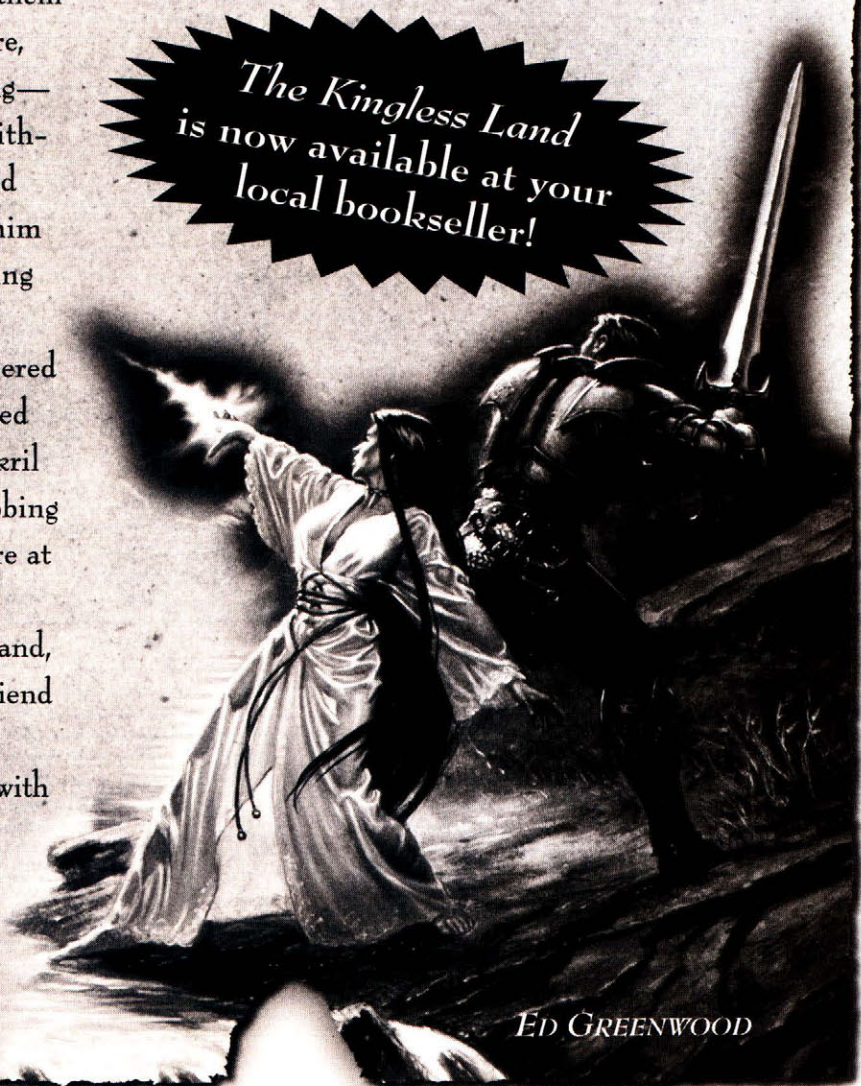
The lightning was silver and green this time. It struck the swordmaster, plucking him from his feet and smashing him back against a wall. In his wake, the procurer was whirled along like a leaf and tumbled against the stones beside him, to be held there as helpless and breathless as Hawkril in the roiling, risen force.

He stared at its source, a room away but striding toward them as terrible as any angry baron shouldering through archways. Tall and terrible she came in her nightgown, with the witchlights of her risen power sparkling and swirling around her. The Lady of Jewels, it seemed, was a powerful sorceress.

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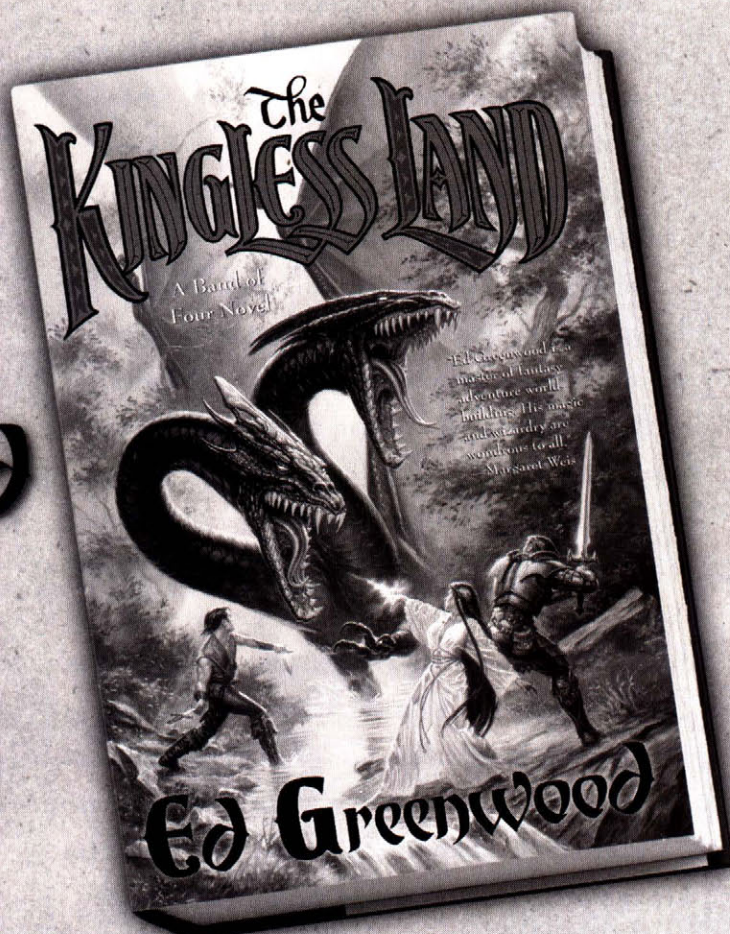
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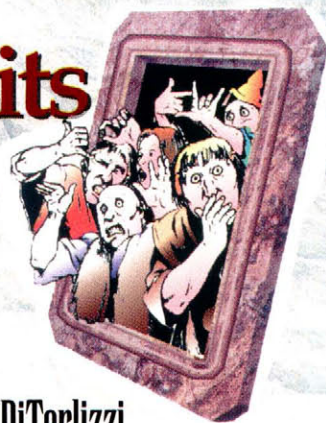
Michael Stackpole

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# High-Level Heroes

## PC Portraits



by Tony DiTerlizzi

"I really tapped into classic D&D and tried to do a very diverse group of characters," DiTerlizzi says, "Some are pretty battle-worn; others, quite refined."

Tony based all of the costumes on 15th century European styles. He has also rendered all of these portraits as full figures, and they are available to download and print out at his website: [www.diterlizzi.com](http://www.diterlizzi.com)



# COUNTDOWN

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## Fighters and Feats

Chances are, your first character was a fighter. In every edition of the D&D® game, the fighter is seen as the “simplest” class, the one that requires the least knowledge to start playing. Well, the basic fighter is still the easiest class to learn, but after 1st level, the 3rd Edition fighter has more options than his predecessors thanks to his mastery of a new game element: the feat.

### Feats

To understand the 3rd Edition fighter, first you must understand feats. While skills are roughly equivalent to the non-weapon proficiencies of 2nd Edition, feats are bonuses that PCs can apply to skills, combat, or other actions. Feats are different from skills in other ways:

#### Feats Don't Cost “Points”

While you choose skills for your characters based on your allotment of skill points, you gain feats one at a time. (Unless you're a fighter, that is.) All characters gain a new feat at first level and then once every three levels.

#### Feats Don't Require a Roll

Unlike skills, feats always work because they're bonuses rather than abilities. For example, the Dodge feat lets you designate one opponent against whom your character gains a +1 bonus to Armor Class. You don't have to roll for success; you just add the bonus.

#### Feats Have Prerequisites

Sometimes, a PC must meet certain requirements before adding a particular feat. For instance, a fighter who wants the Dodge feat must first have a Dexterity score of 13 or higher. To gain Mobility, that fighter must have both the 13+ Dexterity and Dodge. If he has all of those things and is entitled to a new feat, he can take Spring Attack, assuming he also has a base attack of +4 or higher.

#### Our Favorite Feat

To gain the amazing Whirlwind Attack feat, a character must have:

- Intelligence 13+
- Dexterity 13+
- Expertise feat
- Dodge feat
- Mobility feat
- Spring Attack feat
- Base attack +4 or higher

As you can see, a single-class fighter must have good Ability Scores and also devote all of her feats to this “path” to gain Whirlwind Attack at 6th level. Of course, the reward is that she can now give up her regular attacks to make one melee attack against all opponents within 5 feet. Because both Spring Attack and Whirlwind attack have a +4 base attack prerequisite, only a fighter—who enjoys more feats than any other class—can gain this ability so quickly.

These prerequisites provide the game balance to allow some truly awesome abilities. Some, like the Alertness feat that provides a +2 bonus to Listen or Spot Checks, are so basic and universally useful that they require no prerequisites. Others, especially the best combat feats, require a “path” of prerequisites that helps define your fighter's particular style. Some emphasize brute force, while others focus on archery, mounted combat, speed, unarmed combat, or precision. See “Our Favorite Feat” for an example of how prerequisites can lead to some truly astonishing abilities.

#### Some Feats “Stack”

While certain skills complement each other, you can actually take certain feats more than once to multiply their effects. For example, the Toughness feat grants a character +3 hit points. Take it a second time, and you gain another +3 hit points. While this choice might seem like a no-brainer for a fighter, keep in mind that you want to balance short-term benefits with the need to collect the prerequisites for the feats you want the most.



### Play a Fighter ...

- To be proficient with all simple and martial weapons
- To start with a bonus feat
- To specialize at 4th level
- To gain bonus feats every other level
- To use any armor and shield

# TO THIRD EDITION

11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## Fighters

To make fighters more interesting without sacrificing the simplicity that aids new players, the designers made fighters masters of the feat. With more than 70 feats in the *Player's Handbook*, your 3rd Edition fighter isn't likely to be much like another player's.

### Bonus Feats

At 1st level, fighters choose one from a long list of combat-oriented feats. At 2nd level and every other level thereafter, they can choose another bonus feat from that list. To put this in perspective, a typical 10th-level fighter has ten feats, while the typical 10th-level non-fighter has only four.

### Weapon & Armor Proficiency

The 3rd Edition game handles weapon proficiency more elegantly than previous editions. Rather than track proficiency in individual weapons, characters begin with proficiencies drawn from broad categories: **simple**, **martial**, or

**exotic** weapons. Likewise, characters must have proficiency with **light**, **medium**, or **heavy** armor, or shields, to use them effectively.

Naturally, fighters begin with proficiency in all simple and martial weapons, plus all armor and shields. They can expand that repertoire to include an exotic weapon at the cost of a single feat.

### Specialization

In the 3rd Edition D&D game, Weapon Specialization is a feat available only to fighters, and then only those who have taken the Weapon Focus feat (which grants a +1 attack bonus when using a chosen weapon). Specialization grants a +2 damage bonus to attacks with the chosen weapons. Fighters can specialize in ranged weapons, too, but the damage bonus applies only when hitting targets within 30 feet (that is, within "point blank" range).

### Combat Options

As in previous editions of the D&D game, basic combat is simple. Aside from magic or movement, the fundamental combat actions include **attacking** (melee, ranged, or unarmed), **charging**, and making a **full attack**. "Full attack" simply means you're using multiple attacks, a feat, or another special ability, and it prevents you from making a partial action the same round.

When you're ready to take combat to the next level, the rules are already there under a long list of options called "miscellaneous actions." These include loading weapons, checking for traps, picking a lock, and lots of other things fighters don't generally do—but they also include some actions that add new depth to D&D combat. For example, you can try a bull rush, with or without a charge, to push your opponent back.

Other miscellaneous combat actions include disarm, grapple, feint, overrun, and striking a weapon or other object.

### Who Makes the Best Fighter?

While humans are our favorite all-around race, it's harder to say they're the best fighters. Your fighter's race doesn't have as much to do with how good he is but what style he prefers:

**Half-orcs**, with their +2 Strength bonus, make the best brute fighters.

**Halflings** and **elves** have a +2 bonus to Dexterity and missile weapon bonuses, making them great long-range fighters

**Dwarves** and **gnomes** have a +2 Constitution bonus that lets them keep going, and going, and going ...

**Humans** gain a bonus feat and thus can master the most powerful feats sooner than other characters.

Feats and the new combat options benefit all 3rd Edition characters, but they ensure that the fighter remains a great choice not only for beginning players but also for D&D game veterans. 🐉

*Next month, join us for some 3rd Edition kung-fu fightin' and a look at the new and improved monk!*

### Simple, Martial, and Exotic Weapons

The three categories of weapons simplify the proficiency rules of earlier editions while retaining the flavor and game balance of the original D&D game. With feats, however, characters can gain proficiencies they don't get at 1st level.

Fighters, who begin with proficiency in everything else, must take the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat to use a weapon such as a bastard sword, dwarven waraxe, spiked chain, dire flail, or the dread dwarven urgrosh.

These weapons typically deal more damage than others, but some also have special effects. For example, the urgrosh is a double weapon. A fighter using one can make an extra attack as if with a second weapon, but treating it as if it were made by a light weapon, for a reduced off-hand penalty.



# REVENGE OF THE SHEENS



**More Mechanical Horrors for your AD&D® Game**

by Bruce R. Cordell    illustrated by Mark Nelson

**W**hen machines learn the trick of self-replication, machine cysts are born. Cysts are hidden colonies of rapacious artificial life forms, called sheens, whose only goal is their own unending replication and expansion, at the expense of biological life. With every new sheen "generation," subtle and gross design changes contribute to machine evolution. Some wonder if mysterious sheen masters are behind sheen evolution; however, the existence of such beings remains unsubstantiated. Until a particular cyst is burned out completely, an "infected" region regularly contends with strange sheens demonstrating new and more dangerous abilities.

## APPARATIARY AMENDMENTS

The Apparatiary is a machine bestiary detailing over a hundred distinct forms of machine life. Many sheen types are recorded therein, some benign, many more malevolent. As distinct new sheen types are encountered, survivors enter the encounter into the Apparatiary. A few particularly dangerous new forms are recorded hereafter.

### Roller

A roller's body is composed of two parts. The lower chassis takes the form of six metallic barrel-like wheels on flexible axles. This "roller chassis" connects to the upper body via a short flexible stalk, allowing the upper body to swivel in all directions. The upper body is a mass of irregular iron and crystal nodes, spheres, and chips. The main purpose of the upper module seems to be as an anchor for the two massive metallic arms that protrude from either side. The arms are jointed in three places and end in large shovel-like hands edged with tiny, metal teeth. Rollers appear in two sizes: Medium (standing 7 feet tall with 6 HD) and Huge (standing 15 feet tall with 18 HD).

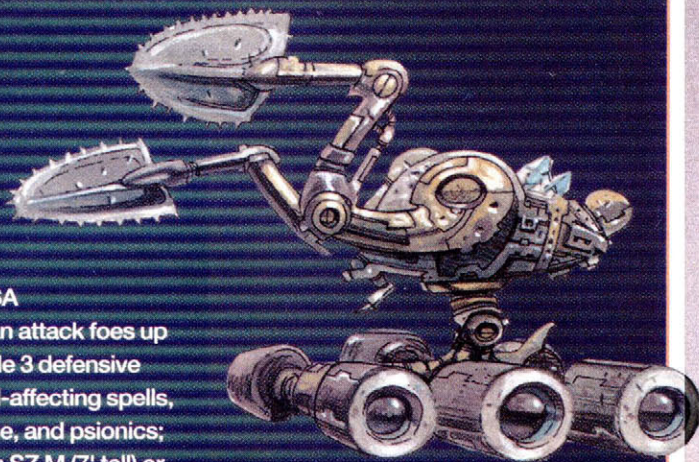
Sheenchasers theorize that rollers serve the cyst in two ways. They perform heavy digging and construction, as their shovel-like hands are particularly well suited for such tasks. However, in the face of armed resistance from biological life, rollers are also use-

## Technical Readout: Roller

**Roller, sheen** (6 HD: 2d4, 18 HD: 1d2); AC -3 (iron chassis); MV 9 (24 on smooth surfaces); HD 6 or 18; hp 48 or 164; THAC0 15 or 4; #AT 2; Dmg 6 HD: 4d4, 18 HD: 4d10 (shovel-handed arms); SA grasp, 18-HD version can attack foes up to 10 feet away; SD grade 3 defensive field, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW magic susceptibility; SZ M (7' tall) or H (18' tall); ML champion (16); AL N; XP 650 or 9,000; Str 14 or 24, Dex 9, Con 20, Int 7, Wis 5, Cha 0.

**SA—Grasp.** If a roller strikes the same foe with both of its attacks in the same round, the roller grapples the foe and attempts to pull it in two. The foe (or a friend of the foe) can attempt a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll each round to break free. Each round the foe remains in the roller's grasp, the roller automatically inflicts its maximum possible damage.

**SD—Grade 3 Defensive Field.** Rollers constantly generate a physical protective field from virtual particles. Generally invisible, the defensive



field drains 3 points of damage from every successful attack directed at the sheen, to a maximum of 108 hit points/day. For example, a longsword damage die that indicates 4 hit points would inflict only 1 point of damage on the sheen, while depleting the defensive field by 3 points. (The field can absorb 105 more hit points that same day, 3 hit points at a time.) Magical attacks that deliver direct damage, such as *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, and so on, are also affected by the defensive field, but only after respective saving throws are made. (See the "Magic Susceptibility" sidebar.)

ful as powerful defenders of a cyst or elite portions of a sheen strike team.

Rollers must return to the machine cyst in which they were constructed once every month to replenish their energy stores. If a roller's energy is depleted and not replenished, it becomes inert. Those who fight and salvage sheens have had some success in "recharging" rollers with finely focused *shocking grasp* spells.

### Burrower

Few—that is, few who still live—have actually seen a burrower's body in its

entirety, as it spends most of the time below ground. The burrower's body is composed of two segments. The "burrower chassis" appears as a 24'-long cone composed of a strange mirror-bright substance. The cone is almost needle-sharp at its origin, and at the base widens to a diameter of only 4 feet. The anterior segment is connected to the cone via a short flexible stalk, allowing the rear body to swivel in all directions. This segment appears as a mass of spindly metallic arms, each jointed several times, and each ranging in length from 10 to 30 feet. All the tentacle-like

### Magic Susceptibility

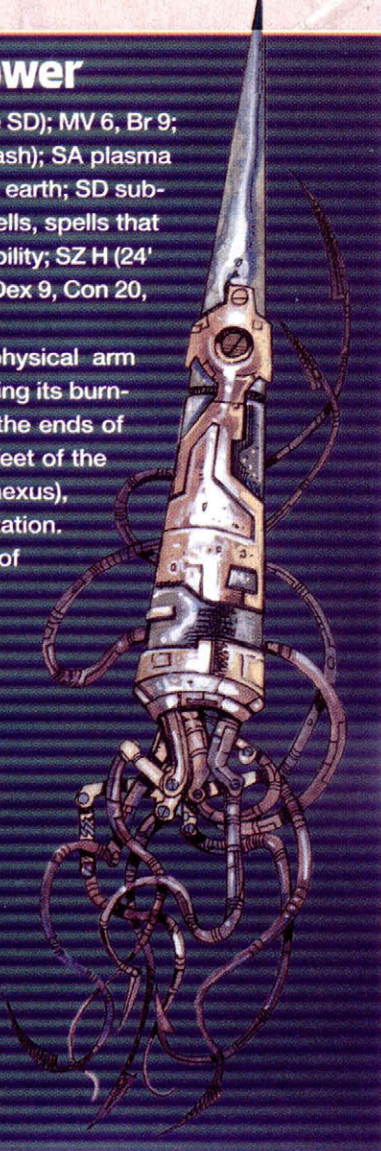
Most forms of machine life are unsuited to resist magic, with the exception of mind-affecting magic. (Machines "minds" work entirely differently from organic minds.) Sheens make saving throws against all spells with a -3 penalty, and sheens suffer an additional +1 point of damage per die of damage delivered from spells that cause physical harm. Thus, a 6d6 *fireball* inflicts 6d6+6 points of damage to a sheen.

## Technical Readout: Burrower

**Burrower, sheen** (1d4): AC -3 (iron chassis—see SD); MV 6, Br 9; HD 10; hp 80; THAC0 11; #AT 6; Dmg 1d6 (arm lash); SA plasma needles, can attack foes up to 15 feet away from earth; SD submerged tactics, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW magic susceptibility; SZ H (24' long); ML champion (16); AL N; XP 4,000; Str 17, Dex 9, Con 20, Int 7, Wis 5, Cha 0.

**SA—Plasma Needles.** In addition to six physical arm lashes, a burrower can simultaneously attack using its burning plasma needles every round, directed from the ends of six other spindly arms. Foes must be within 30 feet of the end of the arms (up to 60 feet from the arms' nexus), and are each allowed a saving throw vs. paralyzation. On a failed save, the foe suffers 1d4+1 points of damage. Note that a burrower could concentrate all its plasma needle attacks on a single foe, forcing multiple saves.

**SD—Submerged Tactics.** The burrower launches its attacks from beneath protective earth, using only its long arms. The initial attack requires a surprise roll from unsuspecting foes. All attacks aimed at the protected sheen's chassis incur a -8 penalty to the attack roll due to cover. Foes can attempt to hit individual arms but suffer a -4 penalty to the attack roll for the called shot. Each arm has 8 hp. If a burrower loses six or more arms, it attempts to disengage, though brave foes can attempt to follow it using the 4'-diameter tunnel of the burrower's earthy wake.



arms possess small orifices at their end. The burrower can fire minor but focused plasmatic bursts from each orifice, and it can use its many-jointed arms to manipulate objects and grapple foes.

The burrower moves through the earth with its cone chassis. In a manner similar to a water-wheel conveyer belt, the cylindrical sides of the cone constantly flow from tip to base. The native strength of the cone, combined with a reinforcing version of a sheen defensive field, allow the cone to pierce even hard rock, and through the action of the moving cone, pull the creature through the earth trailing its mass of manipulative arms after.

When attacking biological lifeforms on the surface or within a nearby cavern, the burrower's preferred tactic is to tunnel to within a few feet of the open air, then burst through the rock with only its arms, leaving the bulk of its body beneath the surface.

The burrower's primary function is prospecting. When mineral-rich veins are found, the burrower can create several shafts, allowing mining-specialized walker sheens easy access. In a pinch, the burrower defends itself and the cyst by attacking any biological life form that becomes aware of it. Burrowers must return to the machine cyst where they were constructed once every month to replenish their complete energy stores.

### Phaser

Among the most recent generation of sheens sporting dangerous new abilities, the phaser is the least noted. The reason: The phaser can skip through solid matter like a flat stone skips on water. Those who've had the misfortune to see a phaser in its corporeal phase describe it as a levitating black globe, limned in red, approximately 1 to 2 feet in diameter. Glassy tendrils exude

from a single orifice and can reach up to 20 feet from the main sphere. Crimson light pulses down the tendril mass whenever the phaser corporealizes. Though fragile, the tendrils are strong enough to ensnare discrete objects weighing less than 500 pounds. Once ensnared, the sheen changes the object's phase, then drops said object into solid unphased matter. When a phased object loses contact with the tendrils, the spirited object explosively (messily, if biological) resumes its corporeal state.

The phaser serves the cyst first as a secret observer, but in a pinch, they are also perfect assassins. The ability to phase requires stupendous amounts of energy, and even though phasers draw their electrical nourishment from an arcane "zero-point accumulator," they must still return to the cyst once per week for maintenance.

### Propagator

Propagators appear in a variety of animalistic and humanoid shapes, from a distance. From within 30 feet, it's easy to see the "animal" for what it is: a sheen. Its "skin" is as an ill-made garment of mirror-bright points, hanging together only with metallic stitching that covers most of the creature. Cracks and gaps in the skin leak drying blood, though small sparks and tiny red lights also wink from within. Smeared gore and the strong smell of rot and fetor hint at the terrible transformation responsible for the propagator.

Propagators have two primary manifestations. The sheens begin as exceptionally tiny glassy nodules (called "Nhan Ohtych Seeds" by divinatory oracles). In fact, the nodules are so tiny that they are invisible to normal vision, but they have been perceived with *true seeing* and *eyes of minute seeing*. Singly, the nodules are sessile. (They cannot move under their own power.) When the glassy nodules come in contact with a motile living creature, they adhere via miniature microtendrils. Once an organism is "infected," the nodules begin to replicate on the skin surface and within a week are visible as a rash. As replication and vitrification continues, the nodules spread over (and throughout) the tiny body surface, killing the host in 1d6 months. In the final stages, the infected

organism appears to be covered in particularly fine glassy particles that catch and refract light into thousands of tiny rainbows.

Though the host organism is dead, the opportunistic propagators makes good use of the bony scaffolding, though much of the excess fleshy matter slowly decays. Using an artificial ligature of microtendrils, propagators animate the body, using it to seek out and infect ever more potential motile hosts.

It is uncertain what role, if any, a propagator plays in the overall function of a machine cyst. It seems clear they were developed solely as a method to eliminate biological life forms.

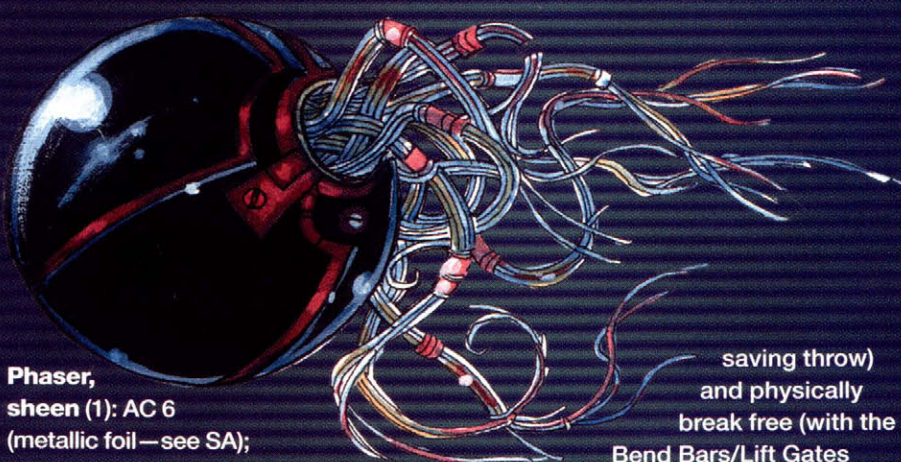
## Arcanosheen

If propagators were designed as a subtle method of disposing of biological competition, subtlety was lost with the appearance of the arcanosheen. Thankfully, only one has yet been identified, but where one can be synthesized, more are sure to follow unless the particular machine cyst responsible is found and burned out.

Built up from a render chassis (see "Mage vs. Machine" in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #258), the arcanosheen resembles a monstrously swollen insect, complete with dozens of writhing metallic legs, feelers, and lethal projections good for cutting and ripping. Obvious differences include an underslung translucent dome measuring 4 feet in diameter. This glassy belly is filled with languidly sloshing pink fluid. Also, the arcanosheen has two metallic arms in addition to its array of cleavers and buzzsaw mandibles. The metallic arms appear surprisingly humanoid.

The arcanosheen's render heritage grants it the abilities of a render, including its many physical attacks, a Grade 3 defensive field, and an electrical discharge attack. However, the arcanosheen gives up the render's plasma breath to make room for something special. Its quartzlike bellypod is filled with archiorganic fluid, harvested from a selection of wizards captured in the wrong place at the wrong time (mostly sheenchasers and machine mages). This hellish broth is baffled with a network of sensitive microtendrils.

## Technical Readout: Phaser



**Phaser, sheen (1):** AC 6 (metallic foil—see SA); MV FI 16; HD 9; hp 72; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg grapple (tendrils, see SA); SA change phase; SD always immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW magic susceptibility, if somehow kept corporeal for 6 rounds the phaser explodes; SZ S (1–2' diameter); ML champion (16); AL N; XP 3,000; Str 12, Dex 9, Con 20, Int 7, Wis 5, Cha 0.

**SA—Change Phase.** A phaser spends most of its time in a state where it and normal matter cannot interact, although the phaser's sensors allow it to access sensory data from the corporeal world.

The phaser's preferred method of attack is to corporealize on its initiative while attacking at the same time with its tendrils, applying all 3 attacks against a single target. If a target is hit by even one of the tendril attacks, it must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation, or it is grappled. On the phaser's initiative in the following round, the sheen attempts to phase itself and its victim; the victim makes a saving throw vs. death magic to remain unphased for the round (which also keeps the phaser corporeal for that round, making it vulnerable to normal attacks). Alternatively, the victim could attempt to make a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll (at a +30% bonus) to break free; however, if unsuccessful, the victim is automatically phased. The victim cannot both choose to resist the phase (with the

saving throw) and physically break free (with the

Bend Bars/Lift Gates

roll). If the victim can resist the phase change for 3 consecutive rounds, the phaser automatically disengages on the fourth round, having spent too much time in a corporeal state. The phaser also releases its victim early and phases if it loses 75% percent of its hit points.

Should a phaser manage to transition a victim to a phased state, the sheen immediately uses its leverage to fling the victim into the nearest solid matter (often the ground), jettisoning its tendrils if necessary. Inanimate objects must make a saving throw vs. disintegration on the Item Saving Throw table or be destroyed. Animate victims make a saving throw vs. death magic. A successful saving throw still inflicts 6d6 points of damage as the victim corporealizes in partial contact with solid matter. A failed saving throw inflicts 12d6 points of damage.

For every 300 feet the phaser travels, it must "skip" into the corporeal world and spend 1 round there, during which time it is also vulnerable to normal attacks.

**SD—Phase Protection.** While phased, the phaser can be seen only dimly and cannot be attacked by normal or magical weapons, or magical spells. (Phased is not an ethereal or standard noncorporeal state.) A phaser can be attacked only when the phaser itself corporealizes for an attack or when "skipping."

These tendrils feed into the arcanosheen's electronic consciousness and interface with its mechanical hands. The upshot: The arcanosheen can cast the spells stolen from organic wizards. In fact, the arcanosheen functions as a 15th-level wizard.

As a prototype, the arcanosheen is something the parent machine cyst keeps close and always protected by 1d4+1 standard renders. However, the arcanosheen has demonstrated some autonomy and could be pursuing its

## Technical Readout: Propagator

**Propagator, sheen** (2-4): AC 3; MV 6; HD 8; hp 64; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12 (flailing strike); SA propagating touch; SD superfluid self-repair nodules regenerate 3 hp/round unless sheen is burned or doused in acid; immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW magic susceptibility; SZ M (6'); ML champion (16); AL N; XP 2,000; Str 12, Dex 5, Con 20, Int 5, Wis 5, Cha 0.

### SA—Propagating Touch.

Wounds inflicted by a propagator infect its foe if a saving throw vs. death magic is failed. (Roll only once at the end of an encounter for each wounded character.) The flesh of infected PCs shows a glassy rash within 1 week and proves fatal in 1d6 months. For each month propagation advances, the victim permanently loses 2 points of Charisma. Standard healing spells such as *cure disease* do not affect propagation of the glassy rash. However, each time the



victim is the target of a spell that conducts electricity (such as *shocking grasp* or *lightning bolt*), the replicating nodules are scrambled, and the victim is allowed another saving throw vs. death magic at a +1 bonus for each 10 hp of damage inflicted by the electricity.

own agenda: namely, the inception of a new machine cyst populated solely with archiorganic sheens able to transmit messages and spells back and forth via embedded tendrils. Perhaps the fabled half-organic Sheen Masters are future inhabitants of the arcanosheen's hoped-for cyst....

## THE MANIKIN: A NEW PC "KIT"

PCs do not choose to take the manikin kit. It chooses them.

Sometimes humanoid captured by a machine cyst are not immediately liquidated. Instead, survivors are channeled into the cyst, where the controlling consciousness studies the intriguing puzzle of biological life. Experiments study the effects of combining biological and

sheen life, often showing such combinations to be inimical. However, some experiments yield fruit, and the resultant humanoid-sheen hybrid is called a manikin.

Functioning manikins are released back into the world, seemingly independent, and free to return to their former business. Manikins possess new abilities above and beyond their former class abilities, but all share a common dread: They all know that at some indeterminate point in the future, a hard-wired compulsion will recall them to the cyst of their modification.

**Requirements:** There is no requirement to be chosen for manikin modification. Manikins can be PCs or NPCs of any class. Fate (or the DM) places the character in a position to be captured

and modified by a nearby machine cyst. Generally, the modification process takes four weeks and is only 65% successful, but these variables should be modified by the DM.

A newly created manikin appears near where it was first captured with no immediate memory of the previous four weeks. The manikin is most likely quite surprised to find his lower torso replaced with a sheen chassis. (See *Distinctive Appearance*.) As re-assimilation into the manikin's former life continues over the next few weeks, brief memories recall horrible pain, banks of blinding lights, armies of sheens, and miles of subterranean metallic tunnels making up a cyst. Eventually, the manikin discovers a deep-seated compulsion that, when activated, forces it to return to the cyst. The manikin knows that at that time, which could be months or years in the future, its accumulated experience will be dissected and downloaded by the merciless consciousness of the machine.

**Role:** Manikins unable to hide their modification beneath voluminous robes or other camouflage are greeted with distrust in locales unfamiliar with sheens, and outright fear and murderous hate in locales previously visited with sheen pestilence. A manikin who finds its former companions (if any), and convinces them of the sanctity of his or her personality is most likely to survive. Once reunited with former companions, the manikin can adventure much as he or she did previously, with access to all former abilities (unless chassis mobility hinders, noted under *Appearance*) and spells, if any. Plus, manikins have new abilities and defenses they can call upon as well. Manikins continue to advance in their previous class with no interruption or XP loss. Psychological or physiological consequences are for PCs to roleplay.

**Distinctive Appearance:** A functioning manikin appears humanoid from the waist up but is all sheen below. Usually, the sheen chassis attached to the biological component is a simple two-or-three-footed walker. Sometimes the chassis of a small roller is used instead, and possibly even that of a ground-effect drifter. Mobility of the manikin depends upon

## Machine "Healing"

All forms of machine life possess self-repair subroutines. Thus, a sheen left for dead might eventually repair itself, if left alone. In game terms, all sheens effect internal repairs at a rate of 1d4 hit points per 24 hours. Sheens with 6 or more HD effect repairs at a rate of 1d4 hit points per turn. Moreover, sheens continue to effect repairs even when brought below 0 hit points. Self repair subroutines are scrambled if a sheen is brought below -10 hit points, at which time it is truly "dead."

the chassis. A walker chassis performs similarly to biological legs, while a roller chassis limits mobility in rough terrain but increases maximum speed on level surfaces; ground-effect drifters hover over the ground at a height of 1–10 feet and move over all terrain at a rate of 12.

**Two Hit Point Tracks:** The manikin, being half biological and half machine, keeps track of two separate hit point totals. Each starting hit point track is figured by dividing the number of hit points the character would normally possess at his level by two, rounding up.

Whenever the manikin suffers damage, the damage total is divided by two, then applied to each track. The fundamental disparity between sheen and biological life shows its hand when odd damage totals are rounded up before being divided and distributed.

The hit points on the biological track heal at the natural rate and are subject to normal healing spells, potions, and similar magic. The sheen hit point track does not respond to healing magic. On the other hand, the sheen hit point track benefits from repair subroutines, and thus hit points on this track always automatically regenerate at 1d4 hit points per turn. Moreover, unless the sheen hit point track is brought to –10, the repair subroutines continue to function.

When one track reaches 0 before the other, the manikin remains conscious as long as the other track has positive hit points. However, additional damage is subtracted from the non-0 track on a 2-for-1 basis. When both tracks reach 0, additional damage once again is applied equally to both tracks, and the manikin loses consciousness. When either track reaches –10, the manikin dies.

**Grade 1 Defensive Field:** The manikin can activate a Grade 1 defensive field. The field drains 1 point of damage from every successful attack directed at the manikin, to a maximum of 16 hit points/day. Once the defensive field has absorbed its limit in a day, it winks out.

**Countermand Capabilities:** The biological mind fused with the machine mind slowly gains insight on the workings of sheen control systems. Over time, manikins gain the

## Technical Readout: Arcanosheen

**Arcanosheen (1):** AC –6 (steel scales); MV 12; HD 20; hp 160; THAC0 3; #AT 5; Dmg 1d10/1d10/1d10/3d10/3d10 (blade arm (x3)/buzzsaw mandibles (x2)); SA casts spells, electrical discharge; SD grade 3 defensive field, inexhaustible energy supply; SW mental susceptibility, magic susceptibility; SZ H (10' diameter); ML fearless (20); AL N; XP 19,000; Str 22, Dex 18, Con 22, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 0.

**SA—Cast Spells.** The semi-autonomous nature of the archiorganic belypod allows the arcanosheen to cast one spell per round in the same round as physical attacks are made, if any. The arcanosheen functions as a 15th-level wizard, but cast spells automatically return 24 hours after casting.

**Spells\*:** (5/5/5/5/2/1) 1st—*sleep*, *charm person* (x2), *magic missile*; 2nd—*mirror image*, *knock*, *acid arrow* (x3); 3rd—*fireball* (x2), *lightning bolt* (x2), *slow*; 4th—*Evard's black tentacles*, *wind wall*, *stoneskin* (x3); 5th—*cone of cold* (x3), *cloudkill*, *true seeing*; 6th—*death spell* (x2); 7th—*finger of death*.

\*DMs with access to "Mage vs. Machine" (in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #258) might wish to substitute sheen-specific spells, if desired.

**SA—Electrical Discharge.** If threatened, arcanosheens can build up a charge in their carapace five times per day. The next object or foe struck in melee takes an additional 2d4 points of electrical damage in addition to physical damage. Alternatively, if an attacker strikes the arcanosheen while it contains an excess charge in its carapace, the foe also suffers 2d4 points of electrical damage.

ability to affect pure sheens in close proximity. This ability usually manifests 1d4 months after the manikin is synthesized.

When the manikin encounters sheens, she can attempt to countermand one sheen per round. Roll 1d20, adding a +1 bonus to the roll for every four points of Intelligence possessed by the manikin. Reference the result on the Sheen Countermand Table below. The table gives you the Hit Dice of the most powerful sheen the manikin can coun-



### SA—Inexhaustible Energy Supply.

A revolutionary prototype shared with the phaser sheen ("zero-point engine") allows the arcanosheen to act without need for a periodic recharge.

**SD—Grade 3 Defensive Field.** See similar SD for roller: The arcanosheen defensive fields drain 3 hit points per physical attack. However, the arcanosheen's self-contained energy source allows the field to remain up continuously despite accumulated absorbed damage.

### SW—Mental Susceptibility.

Arcanosheens are susceptible to mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics, but if successfully affected, the arcanosheen jettisons the archiorganic belypod 1d4 rounds later to regain mental immunity and throw off the mental effect (thus losing its spellcasting abilities).

termand, relative to her level. With a given countermand attempt, the manikin cannot countermand a sheen whose Hit Dice exceed the result on this table.

The "manikin's level" is equal to the highest PC class of the manikin, no matter whether it is fighter, cleric, thief, or another class. Multiclass PC manikins use the level of their highest class and add a +1 bonus per additional class. On a countermand check, a number of HD equal to the manikin's



level +/- a variable are affected (as shown on the table). The manikin can distribute affected HD among potential sheen targets as desired.

Countermanded sheens stand idle (treat as stunned) for 10 rounds. If attacked during this time, the countermand is broken. Multiple countermands are possible, and countermand effects add together.

**Special Hindrances:** Like sheens, manikins are also susceptible to magic, as noted in the "Magic Susceptibility" sidebar on page 33.

Additionally, manikins must support their biological systems with food like any other organism, while their sheen chassis requires more specialized energy.

#### Sheen Countermand Table

| Int. Check | Sheen HD Countermanded |
|------------|------------------------|
| 1-3        | Manikin's level - 1    |
| 4-6        | Manikin's level        |
| 7-9        | Manikin's level+2      |
| 10-12      | Manikin's level+2      |
| 13-15      | Manikin's level+3      |
| 16-18      | Manikin's level+4      |
| 19-21      | Manikin's level+5      |
| 22+        | Manikin's level+6      |

In fact, without monthly recharging, the manikin trundles to a stop, unable to move. Returning to the cyst for a recharge like a standard sheen is something a manikin should avoid, lest they desire early recall and deactivation. Manikin's can fully recharge on a monthly basis with a *shocking grasp* or *lightning bolt* cast at the 5th level of ability and applied to a special capacitor inlet.

Another method of recharge requires the manikin to stand idle four days out of 28, absorbing ambient sunlight on its sheen chassis. The sunlight is converted to charge, motive power, and electric life.

### MECHARCANA

Those with the proper skills and knowledge, namely sheenchasers and machine mages, can salvage working machine modules from defeated sheens. Salvaged modules are incorporated into strange new items with abilities generated through a fusion of magic and mechanics. A few recently discovered pieces of mecharcana, besides those noted in a previous treatise (see *DRAGON® Magazine* #258) do not seem to require recharge as long as they are kept predominantly in lighted surroundings. The discovery of mecharcana could be the first clue in a campaign that sheens are near.

### Orb of Sheenkind

The orb appears as a dull black glassy sphere about 6 inches in diameter. The sphere appears half-melted but is solid. Those who know of its origins would call it a "countermand module."

When held firmly in both hands, the orb of sheenkind allows the wielder to countermand sheens as if he were a manikin, up to three successful uses per day. (See the manikin kit and "Countermand Capabilities" for specific information.) Should an orb fall into the hands of a manikin already capable of countermand, the manikin makes all countermand attempts with a +5 bonus.

**XP Value:** 6,000 **GP Value:** 3,000

### Boots of the Gap

It's difficult to imagine how a single phase module, let alone two, could have been harvested from a phaser sheen; however, the *boots of the gap* indicate that someone salvaged them from such dangerous prey. The boots appear as sturdy green leather knee-highs, each bearing a clear gem set into the ankle buckle.

When worn, the boots allow the user to skip through solid matter three times per day. The wearer steps "into the gap" for up to 10 rounds per use, during which time she appears only as a hazy, indistinct figure. The wearer can sense the material world but cannot interact with it, nor can the material world interact with her. Note that the wearer is "out of phase," not on the Border Ethereal. While phased, the wearer can move at her full movement rate and recorporealize at will. Note that after 10 rounds of phasing, the wearer automatically recorporealizes. If the wearer is still transiting solid matter, she must make a saving throw vs. death magic. A successful saving throw still inflicts 6d6 points of damage; a failed saving throw inflicts 12d6 points of damage.

If the wearer can successfully grapple a foe, she can attempt to phase her victim on the next round's initiative. She can release the victim into the nearest solid matter—once contact is lost, the victim recorporealizes and takes damage as noted above. A quick-thinking victim can attempt to grapple the wearer in turn to avoid being dropped in transit.

Should a wearer possess only a single boot, each phase attempt lasts a maximum time of 10-1d4 rounds, and the user must make a Dexterity check or trip up just as she recorporealizes, which, if the wearer is transiting solid matter, requires the saving throw vs. death magic noted above.

**XP Value:** 3,000 **GP Value:** 1,000

*Bruce acquiesced when Dave demanded a rewrite for Revenge of the Sheens. With less grace, Bruce agreed to a second, and even a third rewrite. On the fourth request for an overhaul, the author slipped into the editor's office late one night to investigate. There he discovered Dave had been replaced by Bruce's old nemesis, a small robot named Happy!*

**P**ower trees are vast, slow-moving towers of metallic beams branching from a squat, multilegged base covered in huge, polished plates of crystal that harness the power of sunlight. Sheens in need of recharging or repair plug into the power tree's modules to recharge while the tree's ten spidery manipulator arms do rapid repairs where needed. These repair routines "heal" damaged sheens at a rate of 1d8 hp per turn. Power trees can recharge and perform repairs on ten different sheens at a time.

Power trees never travel far from their cysts. A single power tree can fully recharge a sheen in 1 turn per HD of the sheen being charged and can charge up to 50 HD of sheens per day. Depleted power trees recharge in 4d6 hours in direct sunlight.

Power trees are heavily armored and have redundant systems to ensure their continuance. For this reason, these sheens can repair damage inflicted to themselves at triple the normal rate of other sheens.

**Power Tree, machine life form:** AC -8 (heavy steel plating); MV 3; HD 36; hp 300; THAC0 15; #AT 10 arms; Dmg 4d6 (-10); SA electrical discharge; SD grade 5 defensive field, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW magic susceptibility; SZ G (30' wide, 50' tall); ML champion (16); AL N; Str 24, Dex 19, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 0.

**SA—Electrical Discharge.** Similar to the discharge ability possessed by many sheens, power trees can use this ability ten times per day without depleting energy. Because of their tremendous energy reserves, power trees can project their electrical discharges up to 300 feet away, causing 10d10 points of damage. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces this damage by half.

**SD—Grade 5 Defensive Field.** This field can absorb 300 points of damage before needing to be recharged. Recharging takes 1 hour for every 50 points of damage absorbed by the field.

# POWER TREE

DESIGNED BY SAMUEL WRIGHT



ART BY TODD LOCKWOOD

## Role Players Wanted

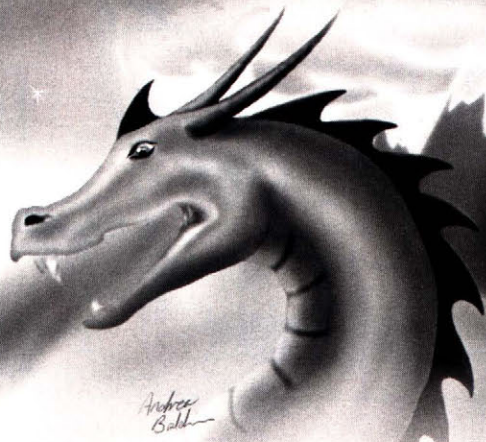
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# LEADERS ON

BY ROBIN D. LAWS

ILLUSTRATED BY JASON MILLET

*The following transcript of "The Hero-Follower Relationship: Managing the Pitfalls," a panel discussion held at the 3rd annual symposium of the Institute for High Level Studies (IHLS), comes courtesy of the Scriber's Brotherhood of distant Alay-Garu. May the ineffable curse that has forced them to labor on such documents for nigh on two centuries soon be lifted.*



# FOLLOWERS

TAP. TAP. TAP. TAP.

**ATHAKIN (MODERATOR, WIZARD OF THE FIFTEEN SPHERES):** Is this thing on?

TAP. TAP. TAP. TAP.

**ATHAKIN:** Everyone, can you hear me? Is this microphone on?

TAP. TAP. TAP. TAP.

**VOICES FROM AUDIENCE:** We can hear you!

TAP. TAP. TAP. TAP.

**ATHAKIN:** I'm not sure this microphone is on.

*The tapping sound is replaced by a buzz, then silence.*

**ATHAKIN:** There definitely seems to be something wrong with this microphone.

**VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:** You just broke it, Athakin!

**ATHAKIN:** I think this microphone is broken.

**VOICE LATER IDENTIFIED AS OTORY, BORDERWALKER OF KRELD:** I can fix it, probably.

*Jumble of sounds, presumably of Otory attempting to fix the microphone.*

**ATHAKIN:** Hrm. Well until then I guess we'll all just have to speak up, I guess. IS THAT OKAY? CAN EVERYONE HEAR ME NOW?

**VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:** We could hear you before!

**ATHAKIN:** Well then we'll just speak up, then. Uh, hello, everyone, hello. As many of you may know, I am Athakin, Wizard of the Fifteen Spheres, Master of the Gates of Lorsmor, Keeper of the Blazing Keys, and secretary-treasurer of the Insitute for High Level Studies. And I'll be your moderator once again for another panel discussion, this one entitled—let me see, I can never remember the titles ...

Oh, yes, this one entitled *The Hero-Follower Relationship: Managing the Pitfalls*.

Let me introduce our distinguished panelists for this afternoon's session. First we have Simon the Vengeful, Baron of Elmspur, member of the Order of the Radial Bone Fracture, and slayer of three of the five heads of Grompur the cyclopean dragon. Welcome, Simon, welcome.

*Simon grunts.*

**ATHAKIN:** Then we have Otory—where did you go? Oh, there you are. Fixing the microphone. Of course. Right. Then we have Otory the gnomish ranger, Borderwalker of Krel.

**SIMON:** A gnomish ranger? How can that be? Fie, this is trickery, I say!

**ATHAKIN:** Sorry, what's that, Otory? We're having trouble hearing you over—oh. Otory says he was generated under 3rd-Edition rules.

**SIMON:** Third Edition? By Briwor's thundering crawl! I must know more of this eldritch thing. What wondrous powers does it grant you?

**OTORY:** [shouting to be heard] Sorry, I signed a non-disclosure agreement.

**SIMON:** A purulent pox on such furtiveness! Speak, taciturn gnome, or I shall—

**ATHAKIN:** Please, please, Simon. What do the guidelines say about keeping our weapons sheathed?

**SIMON:** But, Athakin—

**ATHAKIN:** And anyway, that's totally off-topic. I haven't even finished the introductions. Can we just please for once at least get to the introductions before—

**SIMON:** Very well, frost-bearded wizard, I shall yield.

**ATHAKIN:** To my right is—

**SIMON:** For now.

**ATHAKIN:** Ahem. Well. Ahem. Apropos of nothing, I'll just say that some of us do have *fireballs* up our sleeves, all right? Ahem. To my right is Glynda Sparkle-Elf, Thief of Virtue, Friend to the Poor, and the Taxman's Scourge.

**GLYND:** Hi everybody. I should make clear, incidentally, that by "Thief of Virtue," really it means "Thief with Virtue," you know, like a Virtuous Thief, maybe would be a better way of putting it. I don't steal virtue. I steal from people without virtue.

**ATHAKIN:** You steal from the rich to give to the poor.

**GLYND:** Hey, that's, like, a



really good way of putting it. I never heard it said quite that way before.

**ATHAKIN:** And finally, at the other end of the—

**GLYND:** Additionally I'd like to stress that by "Taxman's Scourge," that means I'm only against unjust taxation. I fully recognize that a certain level of revenue generation, especially if spread progressively through the income brackets, is necessary to sustain a kingdom's infrastructure and bring necessary services to the underprivileged.

**ATHAKIN:** Yes. Well. That said, then, finally, at the end of the table, we have—

**OTORY:** (returning to his seat) Okay, microphone's fixed.

**ATHAKIN:** Oh, good.

TAP. TAP. TAP.

Is this on? Is this on?



**OTORY:** Don't do that.

**ATHAKIN:** I just need to—

**OTORY:** I said, don't!

**ATHAKIN:** Ah yes. Then without further ... ah. Finally, at the end of the table, we have—uh, is this right? It says here Rakoldu the Eviscerator, Breeder of Slime Orcs, Sovereign of the Bleeding Furnaces of Thakold-Manüşh?

**RAKOLDU:** Greetings, foolish mortals.

**OTORY:** Slime orcs are your doing?

**RAKOLDU:** Indeed, I must humbly accept responsibility for that particular act of insane crossbreeding.

**OTORY:** Man, I hate slime orcs!

**RAKOLDU:** You're supposed to. Like we say at the factory, "twice the sliminess of regular orcs."

**SIMON:** Slowly I turn, step by step, inch by inch...

**GLYNDA:** Point of order, chairman. Point of order!

**ATHAKIN:** Well, this isn't—very well, what is it, Glynda?

**GLYNDA:** I thought this year we were supposed to have aura checks at the door.

**ATHAKIN:** I'm pretty sure we did have, you know, after what happened last year... Everyone did get checked at the door, didn't they?

**GLYNDA:** I got checked but—

**RAKOLDU:** Ha ha ha!  
Once again the forces of good are cruelly thwarted by my *ring of mind shielding*!

**GLYNDA:** Even without the aura check, didn't anybody give this guy a simple visual inspection? I mean, call me naïve, but don't you think the blackened, spike-encrusted, ichor-dripping armor might have been a tip-off to someone?

**SIMON:** By the fiery snout of Turler, I can solve this problem in two minutes!

**ATHAKIN:** No, no, this all getting completely off-topic. We're supposed to be talking about followers. Now maybe we should have screened Rakoldu out, but seeing as he's here and all, I feel obligated to give him the benefit of the doubt until he does something to disrupt this forum.

**SIMON:** But he's blatantly evil!

**ATHAKIN:** Now, now, it takes two to make an argument. Now, let's get down to it. Followers. Who would like to be the first to speak up and provide us with the insight gained from many years of practical experience dealing with their followers? Come on, anyone? Doesn't anyone want to speak up? Simon, you go first.

**SIMON:** Uh, well...

**ATHAKIN:** Don't be shy. We're all anxious to hear your unique perspective.

**SIMON:** By the steaming pancreas of It'nys, I have nothing to say!

**ATHAKIN:** Nothing?

**SIMON:** Curse those penetrating eyes of yours, and your puissant mastery of interrogation techniques! I am forced to admit ... I have no followers!

**ATHAKIN:** Then why did you...?

**SIMON:** In the name of the undying Rad'ess'uph, I came for the donuts!

**GLYNDA:** There, there, Simon...

**SIMON:** I don't need your sympathy! I am Simon the Vengeful, Baron of Elmspur!

**ATHAKIN:** Well, how can you be a baron without a single follower?

**SIMON:** It gets lonely. So... very... lonely...

**ATHAKIN:** You do have a stronghold, yes?

**SIMON:** Of course I have a stronghold! The moment I first reached the lofty heights of 9th level, I laid the foundations of what would become House Elmspur. Never minding the complications, I—

**ATHAKIN:** See, complications. Now that's exactly the sort of thing we're trying to get at with this seminar. The people sitting out there are looking forward to 9th level, and they want to know what to expect. I knew you'd have experiences to share. So, what kind of complications?

**SIMON:** Ah... very well, very well! I shall speak! First of all, there was the unpleasant little matter with the present occupant of the lands I took as my fief. Baron Craikel, I believe his name was.

**ATHAKIN:** You seized another noble's land?

**SIMON:** Do you challenge my honor?

**ATHAKIN:** No, I just—

**SIMON:** Then do not say "seized!" Say instead, ah, forgot exactly to ensure that...ah...the land was previously uninhabited.

**ATHAKIN:** You forgot?

**SIMON:** I am a mighty dealer of vengeance! What do I know of this thing called real estate? At any rate, this so-called Baron Craikel was not a warrior, or even a high-level character of any sort. "How then did you ascend to this lofty post?" I demanded of him, and of his warriors. And he did explain to me that he was the hereditary title-holder, as the king's men could attest. At which point I strode boldly forward and did declaim, "King? You mean there's a king around here?" And verily he did tell me that his title came from King Endelo the Sagacious, a kindly monarch beloved by all.

**GLYNDA:** You didn't know your kingdom had a king?



**SIMON:** I've been busy clearing out dungeons since the age of sixteen, woman! And so Craikel said his title came from Endelo, and where did mine come from? My character sheet, I told him. Look right here, I said. You get to 9th level, you're a Lord, that's how it works. And he explained to me that I would still have to visit the king and prove my worthiness and accept what lands Endelo wished to dole out to me. So I sought an audience with the king, spoke of my deeds, and he told me to show that I was as mighty a warrior as I claimed. He bade me to drive off the Cyclopean dragon, which you mentioned in your introduction. Then he proclaimed me indeed a superabundant defender of the realm and made me Baron of Elmspur. He said two fiefs were vacant: one safe and tranquil, the other on the ragged edge of civilization, beset by bugbears and slime orcs.

**RAKOLDU:** Don't look at me. I license those slime orcs out to countless other servitors of evil.

**SIMON:** Verily, I said, give me the craggy wilderness, with monst-  
sters to slay and dungeons to clear! And King Endelo said he'd been hoping I'd say that, and thus I became Baron Elmspur. So I did move the foundations of my keep to that gloriously godforsaken territory, where I rebuilt it. And I did wait for my new followers to appear. And waited. And waited.

**ATHAKIN:** You didn't publicize your elevation to the nobility back in the cities of the kingdom?

**SIMON:** Publicize? What am I, some maundering poet or feckless interviewee on *Entertainment Tonight*? I am Simon the Vengeful, champion of violent good!

**OTORY:** Ah, violent good. My favorite alignment.

**SIMON:** Do you mock me, gnomeling?

**OTORY:** No, no. It's scarcely necessary.

**SIMON:** So I grew bored and went off to explore what dungeons lay in my domains. And by the time I got back, months later, there was a note waiting for me. Minions had shown up to apply for positions as loyal soldiers and henchmen, but got bored of waiting and eating pine needle soup, and left. Needless to say, I tracked them relentlessly, found some of them, and demanded that they return to give me my rightful due as lord. And after the fight, some agreed. Yet even after this, they soon drifted away. They complained that I neglected them for months on end as my companions and I went exploring, that their duties were unclear, that I returned nothing for the fealty they gave me. But when I brought them down into the dungeons with me—those who did not outright refuse to go—like flies they died, flies! If they did not want to face the terrors of a dungeon's 24th level, I asked, why did they wish to follow me?

**OTORY:** Perhaps some were asking themselves the same question.

**SIMON:** Indeed! The survivors left, and good riddance to them, I declaimed! So that's what I'd say to you, as you approach 9th level. Lordship isn't what the troubadours make it out to be. It's just one petty annoyance after another. Followers—more trouble than they're worth, that's what Baron Elmspur says!

**ATHAKIN:** What does the king say?

**SIMON:** King?

**ATHAKIN:** Yes, this King Endelo. What does he think about the

fact that this fief he gave you is completely uninhabited, except for yourself?

**SIMON:** He hasn't said anything. I haven't seen him in years.

**ATHAKIN:** It might be a problem, you realize.

**SIMON:** What business is it of his how I run my barony?

**ATHAKIN:** Uh, well, you do understand the feudal system, don't you?

**SIMON:** Of course! I'm constantly getting embroiled in feuds!

**ATHAKIN:** No, no, not feuding as in grudge matches, feudalism as in the system of government wherein a king grants land to nobles in exchange for their performance of certain duties. They must defend their lands against foreign intruders and muster certain numbers of soldiers when the king goes to war.

**SIMON:** I'm all for that last bit.

**ATHAKIN:** But how will you do this if you have no followers? And you say that your fief is on the borderlands. Presumably there's another king on the other side of that border.

**SIMON:** Presumably.

**ATHAKIN:** If you don't mind my making a suggestion, perhaps you should find out, because he might rightly say that your lands are uninhabited and thus ripe for annexation.

**SIMON:** Is that what he says? I'll strangle him with my bare sword!

**ATHAKIN:** I'm not saying he says that. I don't know your political situation.



**SIMON:** Politics? I spit on politics!

*Cheers break out in the audience.*

I'm just here to kill things!

*Louder cheers.*

**ATHAKIN:** Well, perhaps having followers isn't for you.

**SIMON:** That's what I've been saying all along.

**ATHAKIN:** Uh, then, let's throw this over to one of our other pan-elists. Glynda, you're a thief—

**GLYNDA:** A virtuous one, mind you!

**ATHAKIN:** Yes, well, you inherit a gang at, what is it, 10th level? At least you don't have to worry about politics.

**GLYNDA:** You're pulling my leg, right? Politics? Let me tell you about politics. First of all, when my followers showed up, they were thieves all right, but they weren't necessarily the politically progressive thieves I was hoping for.

**OTORY:** They just showed up? I had to recruit my followers one at a time.

**GLYNDA:** I'm simplifying. There was always this gang of outlaws



in my neck of the woods, the Skullcrackers they used to call themselves. I'd heard of them and even had a few run-ins with them over the years. Not that I always knew it was them trying to steal things from my party's packs while we slept, or starting tavern fights with us. Well, at 10th level, as fate would have it, I ended up in a big fight out in the forest, and I wound up dispatching their leader, Acheng Foul-Tusk. So they knelt down to me and said it was Skullcracker tradition that whosoever slew their leader would take his place. And that's how I found myself with a gang. So it's not like they just showed up one day. As we say back in Elfland, events in my life led me on the path of destiny. So the first thing I say to them is, that name has got to go. "Skullcracker" just doesn't say "noble friends of the poor fighting injustice wherever we find it." Well, they laughed at that, as if it was funny somehow! And over the next few months, I found out that you can't always assume that a thief is automatically familiar with the basic principles of professionalism. Time and again I found they were disobeying the spirit of my instructions. They were choosing their targets based on which victims were easiest, not on which were the most unjust. And sometimes they would even harm the people they stole from! I had to do

quite a bit of soul-searching when I found that out. What I concluded was that they were feeling disempowered by the hierarchical structure I'd imposed on them.

**SIMON:** Is that elvish you're speaking?

**GLYNDA:** Sorry, what I meant was that they were perceiving my instructions as like a total power trip on my part, as a top-down directive instead of an organic outgrowth of collective ideology.

**SIMON:** Ah, it is elvish.

**GLYNDA:** So I told them that we'd sit down and draft a charter to give everyone a say. We'd make our decisions based on discussion and consensus. Just because I was 10th level didn't mean I was better than they were, no more than my elvish good looks gave me privileged status. So we decided everything together.

**ATHAKIN:** So what happened?

**GLYNDA:** They decided to ride down on the surrounding villages like a scouring wind, laying waste to everything in their wake. Leaving nothing behind but the smoke from burning huts and the cries of the wounded.

**ATHAKIN:** And you let them?

**GLYNDA:** No, I kicked their sorry behinds, took the experience points for defeating them, and resolved to recruit a gang hipper to my radical agenda. It took awhile to find properly enlightened companions. But gradually I assembled a group of people who could engage in the consensus process and come to the sorts of conclusions I wanted. And that's how my band of Merry Men was formed.

**OTORY:** Well if they all get to live out in the forest with your bedroll next to theirs, no wonder they're merry.

**GLYNDA:** Was that a sexist comment?

**OTORY:** Hey, don't look at me, it was the evil guy said that.

**GLYNDA:** I heard you distinctly.

**RAKOLDU:** Just because I'm evil doesn't mean I'm a chauvinist.

**GLYNDA:** You think a woman's not equal to a man, Otory? Come over here and say that.

**ATHAKIN:** Please, Glynda, please. It was all going so well until now.

**GLYNDA:** He wants to see what a woman can do? I'll show him.

**ATHAKIN:** Please, put the darts away. Like you said, resolve things by discussion.

**GLYNDA:** For discussion, you need common ground.

**OTORY:** Hey, I'll get common on the ground with you any time.

**GLYNDA:** That tears it, you height-challenged little—

**OTORY:** Sure, insult me for being a gnome. That's plenty enlightened.

**ATHAKIN:** Otory, you're deliberately provoking her. And going off-topic. Maybe you could make up for it by sharing your approach to the leader-follower relationship.

**OTORY:** All right. As maybe you know, a ranger's followers do just sort of show up. One at a time, over time, in a series of encounters. And the tough thing is, you don't always know right off whether the person or crea-

ture you've just met is there to join you, or is an opponent to defeat. You know, it can be real embarrassing to attempt to befriend a cougar who just wants you for dinner. Or just as bad, that cougar might have been a potential follower, you know what I'm sayin'? But before you can even reach into your pack for a sprig of catnip, the other members of your party are whaling on it with flails and halberds! And I learned you can't assume that just because something isn't on the random chart of possible followers, doesn't mean it isn't a possible follower. Who'd have thought that one of my most faithful and useful helpers would be a giant centipede?

**GLYNDA:** A giant centipede? Eww!

**OTORY:** See, I get that all the time. And Steve is way more behaved than my halfling fighter. That guy never takes a bath.

**ATHAKIN:** Your giant centipede—he's not here, is he?

**OTORY:** No, he's attending a different symposium. The other challenge is communicating with your followers once you've got them. The nonhuman, unintelligent ones especially.

**GLYNDA:** You mean "differently sentient," don't you?

**OTORY:** For instance, it took a long time to teach Yangi, my brown bear companion, to tell the difference between friend and foe while patrolling his section of the borderlands.

**ATHAKIN:** How do you communicate with a bear, exactly?

**OTORY:** A few basic hand signals and a lot of honey.

**SIMON:** Your tricksterish ways

may fool others, gnomelet, but I am not deceived! When you say that followers can be useful, you clearly speak false!

**OTORY:** No, no, really. The trick is to give them all useful assignments that make your life easier, so you can get on with the dungeon-bashing. I have a territory I'm supposed to patrol as part of my obligation as a borderer. Well, my fighters and rangers take care of that. In tandem, naturally, with my predatory animals, who sniff out intruders before they even get near. The falcon takes care of overhead surveillance. My brownie earns his points by casting auguries and other useful, minor magics. My thief supervises my affairs in town, doing legwork, research, and rumor-mongering. The organization runs itself. I make sure they're happy, get plenty of gold, milkweed, rodents, whatever it is that they're into. They got a problem, they know to come to me. Just match up the follower to the assignment, remember to check in on them every so often, and you're laughing.

**GLYNDA:** And the centipede? What's his job?

**OTORY:** Steve's the one follower who comes with me on dungeon runs. You should see that dude skitter under locked doors.

**ATHAKIN:** And finally, Rakoldu, perhaps you could...?

**RAKOLDU:** Exxxcellent. But before I start ... I'd like to quickly plug the seminar I'm giving tomorrow. It's a little thing I call New Dimensions in Flesh-Eating Terror, and it'll be in the Eleanor Roosevelt Ballroom at 10 A.M. If you haven't paid your materials fee yet, you can just bring me the gold pieces before we start. Now, followers. I must confess to a note of amusement as I listen to you cretins torturously worrying out all of the petty details of minion management. I never have to worry about such bothersome matters. I maintain a sixteen-level dungeon complex, one hundred and twenty rooms—including the secret ones. I have slime orcs, I have ogres, I have ogre magi. Beholders, catoblepi, ankhegs galore. Nearly nine hundred inhabitants in all. And do I have to worry about them? No. They always fight to the death, they never seem to need food that I know of—I mean, I assume they

forage and all, but they don't come whining to me about it. Gold—well, that's for them to accumulate, that's none of my business. Magic items: I needn't supply those, either. I tell them, you have magic items, don't just hide them in a pile of otyugh offal, use them, for Gruumsh's sake, use them! But do they? No. That would be too easy, wouldn't it? And so when adventurers come in, they die. But is that a problem? No. For other monsters come to replace them, like that! I don't even have to conduct interviews.

**SIMON:** And what character class did you say you were?

**RAKOLDU:** I ... didn't say.

**SIMON:** Then I shall put this another way, poltroon: Which page of the *Player's Handbook* did you get that list of followers from?

**RAKOLDU:** *Player's Handbook*? Ha ha ha! I mock your pants and eyebrows! I am shackled to no mewling *Player's Handbook*! For Rakoldu the Eviscerator is ... a nonplayer character!



**SIMON:** I knew it! Have at you, you heaping pile of potential experience points!

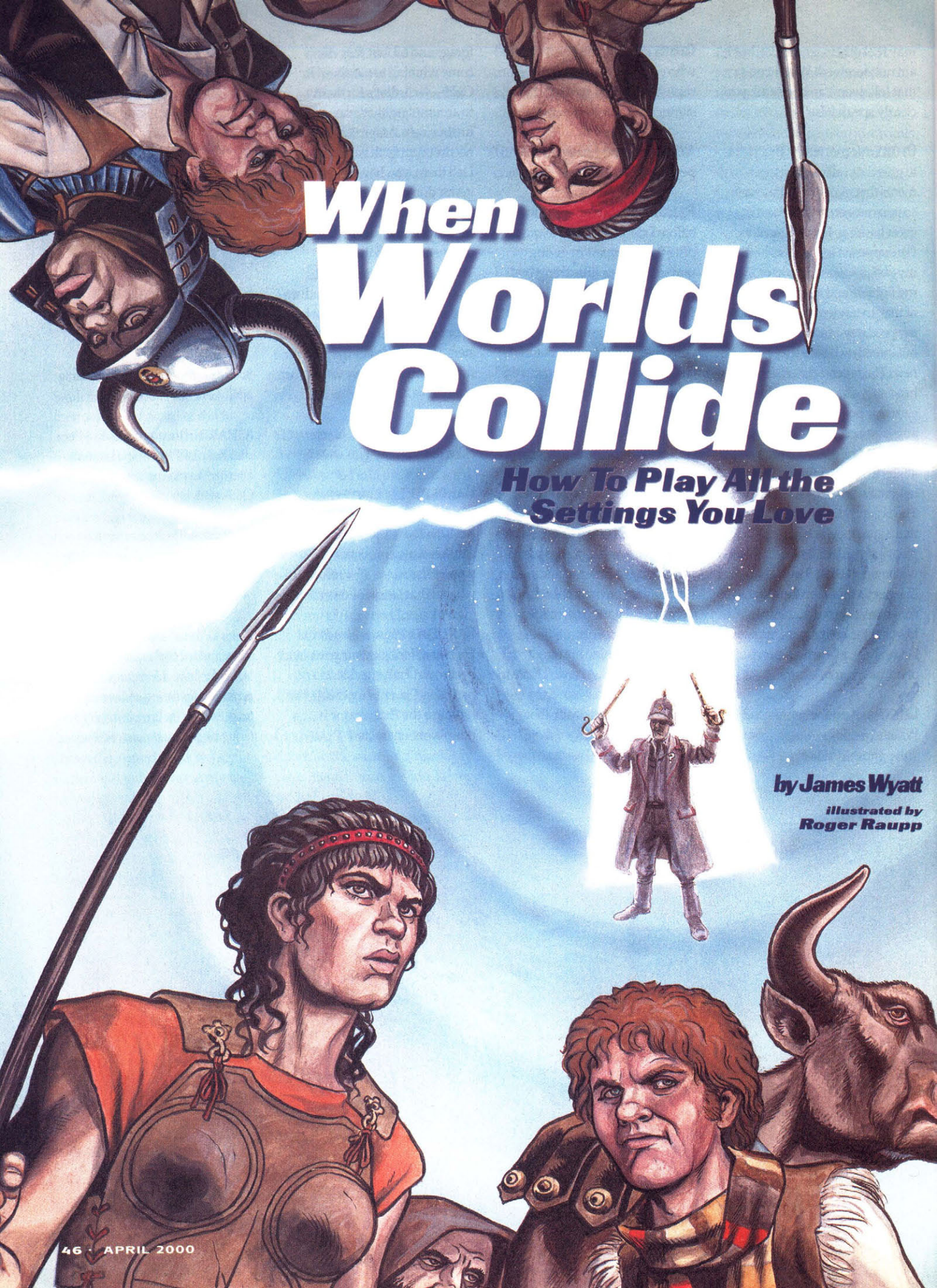
*Sound of armored warrior upending table. General pandemonium.*

**ATHAKIN:** [through the din] People! People! Please! We haven't even gotten to the Q&A yet!

*More chaos. The tape cuts out.*

*Robin D. Laws' countless minions sweat and toil for him, with nary a word of thanks. He requires them to perform humiliating and menial tasks, such as the composition of flattering biographical notes. Fie on him!*





# When Worlds Collide

**How To Play All the  
Settings You Love**

**by James Wyatt**

**illustrated by  
Roger Raupp**

**Roleplaying opens infinite possibilities. The DM's most rewarding task is creating a world, the setting for a campaign, the place where adventures happen. The nature of this world is limited only by the DM's imagination—and DMs are a pretty imaginative bunch.**

**Sometimes too imaginative.**

What do you do when you have more ideas for campaign worlds than you will ever have time to play? Especially when other factors intrude—like school, work, or family—there's rarely time to run one campaign, much less the three others bouncing around in your brain at any given moment. And what about other games altogether? You'd love to play the *ALTERNITY*® or *DRAGONLANCE*®: *FIFTH AGE*® game on a regular basis, but there's just no time.

There seem to be only two possible options in this situation. One is to switch among campaigns as rapidly as your players allow, so that—over the course of a year or two—you might finally get to run an adventure in each campaign. The problem with this option is that there's no continuity—each adventure is separate from all the others, player characters rarely advance in levels, and none of the campaigns develops very quickly. It's a possibility, but it would lack much of what makes roleplaying exciting and memorable.

The other option seems to be combining some or all of these ideas into a single campaign—one that spans a number of different worlds, possibly even genres and game systems. Whether it means taking a single group on a wild ride through the multiverse or somehow creating a link between different heroes on different worlds, a world-spanning campaign seems to be the perfect solution to the problem. Of course, it creates a few problems of its own.

Here are three different campaign models that allow this kind of world-hopping: the **World-Spanning Organization**, **Shifting Worlds**, and the **Eternal Champion**.

**The World-Spanning Organization**

In this campaign model, the PCs are members of an organization that sends them on missions to different worlds or dimensions. PCs can travel from world

to world by spelljamming, interplanar travel, powerful teleportation devices, gates (magical or pseudo-scientific), or faster-than-light drives. The heroes are equipped with spells or devices that allow them to speak and understand the languages of the worlds they visit. The organization briefs the heroes on their mission, the culture and customs of the world, and what dangers they might face. Probably, the heroes make every attempt to fit in with the natives in their clothing, appearance, and behavior.

The PCs' missions might be completely unrelated to each other, but a more fulfilling campaign emerges if there is a unifying theme. Perhaps this world-spanning organization exists specifically to combat the menace of another such organization. Plane-shifting githyanki or spelljamming mind flayers provide excellent enemy agents for such a campaign. This doesn't mean that the PCs fight mind flayers at every turn—much of the time the enemies behind-the-scenes, and the heroes have to find their way through complex webs of deception and trickery, as well as potential legions of minions and allies, before uncovering their true opposition.

The advantage of this campaign model is that the PCs are a constant through every adventure. Each player has a character who gains experience and advances in level over the course of the campaign, which is an important part of what makes a campaign rewarding for players. Since members of a world-spanning organization can conceivably come from any known world, the PCs can be a crazy amalgam of races and classes—*anything* from *any* published or unpublished campaign setting. As in the *PLANESCAPE*® and *SPELLJAMMER*® campaigns, a wizard from Faerûn can adventure side-by-side with a gladiator from Athas and a minotaur from Krynn. With your approval, of course, characters can explore more

## The Peregrines

Here's an example of a PC party made up of members of a world-spanning organization. The characters are members of the Peregrines, a religious order of knights who travel from world to world in a holy war against the githyanki.

Sergei, a human cleric from the *RAVENLOFT*® domain of Valachan;

Kellra, a human gladiator from Athas;

Gerson, a minotaur ranger from a world where he once was a human king;

Shadowdancer, a halfling psionist/thief from a world resembling ancient Rome;

Tax, a half-elven mage/thief from a world of continual night.

Note that input from the players has already given the DM a bank of three original worlds to use in the campaign, in addition to the published worlds of the *RAVENLOFT* and *DARK SUN*® settings. As the players detail their characters' backgrounds, the DM can glean key information about these new worlds, and plenty of adventure ideas as well.

unusual races and classes. On the other hand, a motley crew like this could have a hard time fitting in on any of the worlds they visit, so you might require your players to choose more "standard" races.

The world-spanning organization should have a base, or at least a lone agent, on each world that the PCs visit. This agent can provide the PCs with background information on their mission and the world itself, change currency, help acquire equipment, and act as a go-between for communication with their higher-ups in the organization. If transportation between worlds relies on gates, this agent can be the guardian and operator of the gate on each world.

Of course, once in a while you can force the PCs to visit unexplored territory, which can be an adventure in itself. While pursuing their primary goal, they would also have the task of collecting notes on the culture and politics of the world, to help brief the next agents who visit it. Without an agent to brief them, they have to acquire currency and clothing on their

## Kellra Shifts Worlds

Here's an example of how to shift a character from one reality to another. Take Kellra, the human gladiator from Athas mentioned earlier as a member of the Peregrines. Let's say she was actually created as part of an Athasian party for a DARK SUN campaign. She might look something like this:

Kellra: AC 7 (leather pieces); MV 12; Gladiator 3; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+2 (impaler, specialized); S 15, D 12, C 18, I 14, W 18, Ch 15. AL NG. Proficiencies: Speak Common and Thri-kreen, Armor Optimization, Weapon Improvisation, Heat Protection, Psychic Defense, Blind-fighting. Wild psionic talent: psychic messenger.

After just a single adventure on Athas (not enough to raise her to 4th level), Kellra and her companions get shifted to Faerûn. This is quite a dramatic shift! Kellra, who was originally 6'2", suddenly shrinks a good 5 or 6 inches. She loses 1 point from each of her inflated ability scores—or even 2 points, depending on your campaign. She's now an ordinary fighter, but she keeps a few benefits of her gladiator class, such as bonuses to her unarmed attacks. Her weapon specialization changes to a weapon used in the Realms, but still something with character—perhaps a battle-axe or spear. Let the player decide. She now speaks a different Common tongue, and Orcish instead of Thri-kreen (player's choice, again, unless there's a good reason). Blind-fighting is fine, but the rest of her proficiencies are somewhat problematic. Replace Heat Protection with an appropriate Survival proficiency, and let the player choose new proficiencies to replace the other three. Her wild talent, alas, just disappears.

own. They might end up becoming the organization's resident experts on such a world and find themselves frequently reassigned there.

A campaign based around a world-spanning organization lets the PCs experience (and you to create) a large variety of worlds without necessarily exploring any one in great depth. There could be worlds to which the heroes return again and again—

hotbeds of enemy activity or simply worlds they're very familiar with. But for the majority of adventures, you need to create only the most basic outlines of a situation, the circumstances surrounding it, and a bit about the world and its populations.

### Shifting Worlds

A shifting worlds campaign adds a strong element of mystery to the basic world-spanning idea. Rather than being voluntary agents of a world-spanning organization, the PCs move between worlds against their will and with no clear purpose. At unpredictable times, one reality dissolves to be replaced by a different one. What's more, the heroes themselves change to adapt to their new reality.

A campaign like this begins with an ordinary PC party—all drawn from one campaign world and following its rules for character creation and equipment. At some point—it might be after a single adventure, or in the middle of it, or after a year or so of real time when you're getting tired of the campaign—the characters are translated into a new world. The characters should remain similar in most respects but change enough to notice it. For example, a wizard from Faerûn who found himself shifted to Athas might undergo some minor physical changes, find his ability scores boosted somewhat, discover a new psionic talent, and—most importantly—realize that he must draw power for his spells from living vegetation. But he remains essentially the same character, despite these profound changes. You should alter proficiencies, particularly language proficiencies, so they are relevant in the new campaign world. Characters shifted to a new reality find that they understand the language spoken around them and know the basics one needs to get by in this new society.

It's possible to declare that the PCs, when they have shifted, forget their previous reality completely, believing that they have always lived in the new world. Possible—but very difficult to roleplay. It's certainly easier to let the PCs be as confused and mystified as their players are. In fact, the reason behind the shifting worlds can and should be one of the great mysteries of the campaign—the heroes want to figure out what's causing them to move from world to world. Don't let them figure it out too easily!

The campaign grows more interesting as the PCs gradually realize that their diverse adventures on different worlds are actually part of a larger cosmic drama. The connection should not be as obvious as an enemy race of githyanki or illithids. Instead, their opponent could be an incredibly powerful demilich with minions across the multiverse. The heroes might never encounter this creature, and they might only theorize about its existence after years of battling its minions through countless adventures on a multitude of worlds. Then, finally, when they are ready to confront their long-time enemy, or even when they have destroyed it, they might learn that a powerful good force—an aasimon, perhaps, or even a Power—has been shifting them from world to world as unwitting agents in a cosmic struggle against the demilich.

Like the world-spanning organization model, a shifting world campaign allows the players to feel a sense of continuity in their characters. Though the characters change somewhat, key factors (including experience points) remain constant, and the heroes progress through an ongoing campaign. Unlike the first model, however, a shifting world campaign also allows you to shift between game systems. Your party of adventurers from Faerûn might suddenly find themselves the crew of a starship in the Verge.

A campaign based on this model works best if the shifts from world to world are a little less frequent than in the world-spanning organization model. You must put a little more effort into detailing each world, since the heroes spend some significant time there. The greatest benefit is that you can move from campaign world to campaign world without the baggage—the fantastic astronomy of the SPELLJAMMER campaign, the jaded cosmopolitanism of the PLANESCAPE campaign, or the vast network of a world-spanning organization.

### The Eternal Champion

Michael Moorcock was not content to spend his time in a single "campaign world." It is partly to his work that the AD&D game owes the concept of a multiverse—a series of distinct but connected universes that make up the whole of reality. The key aspect of Moorcock's multiverse is that the universes are

connected. There is one city, Tanelorn, that exists in all universes at all times. And there is the Eternal Champion—one hero with multiple identities, appearing in one universe as Elric, in another as Corum, and with different names in different worlds. This idea of the Eternal Champion can form the basis of a third model for a campaign that spans worlds.

A heroic fantasy (or science-fiction) campaign presupposes that the player characters are heroes—people whose deeds make a difference for the forces of good in the world. As heroes, then, suppose that they too have counterparts in every universe—heroes whose fates are linked together with theirs, though their names, faces, races, and classes might all be different. The way to accomplish this in a campaign is with a character tree.

Introduced in the *DARK SUN* campaign, the character tree recently made a reappearance in the *Jakandor* series of campaign products. The idea is that each player generates three different characters who all advance in level together, though only one is adventuring at a time. In an Eternal Champion campaign, each of these heroes exists in a different universe, a different campaign world. So rather than having a single character move from world to world, as in the other two models, the scene of the adventures moves, but the characters are different in each one. Each time one of a player's heroes advances a level, the others do as well.

This campaign model can threaten the players' sense of continuity. All the heroes are still advancing in level, which is an improvement over unlinked adventures that jump from campaign to campaign, but they are still distinct characters. To minimize the discontinuity, each of a single player's characters should be similar in essential personality and characteristics. They are, after all, all manifestations of the same cosmic heroic archetype. For example, one player might play a wizard in the *GREYHAWK*® campaign, an Adept in Gothic Earth, and a Tech Op in *The Verge*, all with similar traits—nearsightedness, perhaps, and a kindly, wise disposition. Their ability scores should be close, if not an exact conversion. They have different backgrounds, naturally, but there should be key points of convergence—being an orphan, perhaps, or some other formative experience.

The other way to maintain the players' sense of continuity is to introduce common themes and threads into the different heroes' adventures. Just as each hero is a manifestation of a universal heroic archetype, their adventures follow archetypal themes as well. They might not face a single common enemy whose influence extends across the multiverse (such as the demilich suggested in the shifting worlds model), but the heroes should recognize their enemies as different expressions of the same evil. Naturally, you need to balance this distant echo among adventures, reinforcing the continuity of the campaign, with the need to avoid repetition, providing the heroes with fresh challenges.

Naturally, in a campaign modeled after the Eternal Champion idea, the heroes on one world are mostly unaware of their counterparts on other worlds. They might have dreams that suggest the others' exploits in distant dimensions—especially if some bit of knowledge possessed by one hero is essential to another—but certainly not conscious memory. If you decide to create a place like Moorcock's Tanelorn, which somehow exists in every dimension, then the heroes might (after a long and arduous quest to reach this mysterious place) at least hear tales of their counterparts' adventures, if not actually meet them face to face. The quest to find this nexus of the multiverse could be a climactic finale to a campaign, with different segments of the quest being played out by different groups of heroes until all the groups finally reach their goal simultaneously.

An Eternal Champion campaign probably requires the greatest amount of work for each campaign world. It's probably best not to use more than three or four worlds, with the same number of heroes on each player's character tree.

### Next Steps

Once you've chosen a model for a world-spanning campaign, the next step is creating at least some of the worlds that your heroes will visit. Of course, you can use published campaign settings for any or all of the worlds involved in a world-spanning campaign. The *World Builder's Guidebook* is also a great resource for campaign ideas—even if you're brimming with ideas already, this book can help you refine them and

## Kellra's Character Tree


Taking the same example as before, assume that Kellra the Athasian Gladiator is an Eternal Champion now. The other worlds in the campaign, all sharing Athas' hard edge, are a Viking setting (using the Historical Reference book), the *RAVENLOFT* setting, and a near-future cyberpunk setting played with the *ALTERNITY* rules. Here's what Kellra's counterparts in these other universes might look like:

**Krythling**, a Viking warrior-woman with troll blood. Shunned by her people and raised among trolls, Krythling has always been a warrior, though she never fought for anyone's amusement (unlike her gladiator counterpart).

**Kellira**, an Avenger in the *RAVENLOFT* campaign. Kellira's family was slaughtered by a werewolf while Kellira was having a secret tryst with a young man in her village. She is driven by a single-minded obsession with revenge that drives away anyone who would get close to her.

**Kelly**, a cyber-enhanced *Combat Spec*. Like Kellra, she's a gladiator, built for bloody entertainment in the filthy streets of her metropolis home.

flesh them out, always remembering to add a healthy dose of fantasy. You can also adapt settings from novels or movies you've enjoyed; the world-spanning aspect of the campaign might also give you a little more freedom in choosing your source material. If you've always dreamed about an adventure based on *Les Misérables*, for example, you can send your PCs there (as members of a world-spanning organization or by mysteriously shifting worlds) without worrying about sustaining a whole campaign set in Revolutionary France.

Whichever campaign model you choose, you'll be opening new possibilities—not just for your players, but for your overactive imagination. 

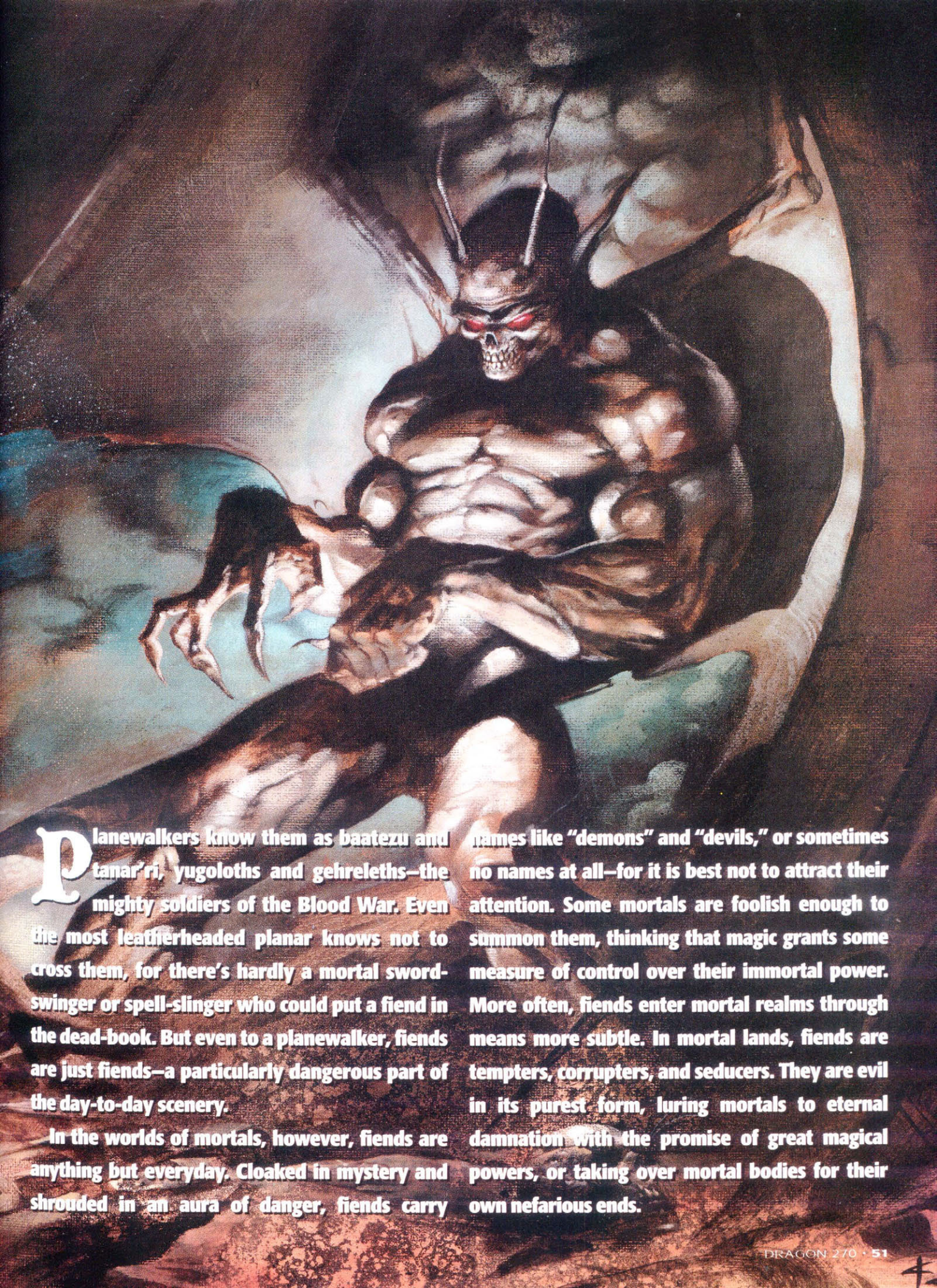
*There's not enough space in James's head for all the worlds he's created. In that tight space, they collide quite a bit. He's working on getting a bigger head, though some people say it's already big enough.*

# The Hidden Faces of Evil

Fiends Who Walk  
the Prime Plane

by James Wyatt

illustrated by  
Greg Staples



**P**lanewalkers know them as baatezu and tanar'ri, yugoloths and gehreleths—the mighty soldiers of the Blood War. Even the most leatherheaded planar knows not to cross them, for there's hardly a mortal sword-slinger or spell-slinger who could put a fiend in the dead-book. But even to a planewalker, fiends are just fiends—a particularly dangerous part of the day-to-day scenery.

In the worlds of mortals, however, fiends are anything but everyday. Cloaked in mystery and shrouded in an aura of danger, fiends carry

names like "demons" and "devils," or sometimes no names at all—for it is best not to attract their attention. Some mortals are foolish enough to summon them, thinking that magic grants some measure of control over their immortal power. More often, fiends enter mortal realms through means more subtle. In mortal lands, fiends are tempters, corrupters, and seducers. They are evil in its purest form, luring mortals to eternal damnation with the promise of great magical powers, or taking over mortal bodies for their own nefarious ends.

## How They Come

Fiends can enter the Prime Material plane through several means. Too often, they are summoned by ignorant or arrogant mortal wizards who foolishly hope to benefit from the bargain. Spells commonly used to summon fiends include *ensnarement*, *gate*, *cacofiend* (described in *The Planewalker's Handbook*), and *lesser calling* (*Faces of Evil: The Fiends*). Spells like *binding*, *spirit wrack* (from *The Planewalker's Handbook*), and *true name* (also from *TPH*) can help to control a fiend once it is summoned.

Regardless of the magic used, summoning a fiend is an incredibly dangerous business. Even if forced to acquiesce to a wizard's commands, a fiend always seeks to twist the letter of an agreement to its advantage, to lure its erstwhile master into a trap, or utterly to corrupt the spellcaster utterly.

Fiends can also enter the Prime through a process known as transposition, in which the fiend gradually trades places with a mortal—eventually bringing the fiend to the mortal's home world and condemning the mortal to instant death on one of the lower planes. (This process is described in the RAVENLOFT® accessory *Van Richten's Guide to Fiends*.) A powerful fiend seeks out a mortal of evil disposition and forms a bond with that unfortunate soul. Each continued evil act on the mortal's part carries the transposition process along, removing more and more of the victim's humanity to the lower planes, and replacing it with the fiend's essence. The mortal gradually takes on the appearance and even powers of the fiend, such as sharp talons or leathery skin, a succubus' *charm person* power, or an arcanaloth's poisonous claws. The fiends that typically invade the Prime through transposition include the erinyes, gelugon, pit fiend, balor, nabassu, succubus, arcanaloth, nycaloth, yagnoloth, and any variety of gehreleth.

Finally, fiends can sometimes enter the Prime through a *plane shift*, *teleport without error*, or other such spell. There is some debate about whether devils (baatezu) can freely enter the Prime in this manner. Rumor (as expressed in the *PLANESCAPE® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* book) has it that baatezu cannot enter the Prime Material or Upper Outer planes at will. The apparent truth of the matter (as

spelled out in *Faces of Evil*) is that, while baatezu can *teleport* to the Prime, sometimes the nobles and lords of Baator make agreements with other powers to restrict such travel. Few baatezu are brave or stupid enough to disobey orders forbidding them from entering the Prime, which explains the source of the rumor. In any event, tanar'ri and yugoloths can freely *teleport* to the Prime Material plane.

Summoning a fiend is not something that any player character should ever attempt. Those who try should fail and suffer the unpleasant consequences—as should the hapless non-player character wizards who make such a fatal error. An NPC's attempt to summon a fiend, successfully or unsuccessfully, could be the backdrop for an adventure in itself, as the PCs seek to prevent the wizard's folly or simply react to the evil deeds (kidnappings and sacrifices) performed in preparation of the summoning. Likewise, the process of transposition can be the seed of an adventure as well, as the PCs struggle to prevent the fiend from gaining complete entry into their world. Few victims of transposition can ever be completely redeemed, but the attempt is a quest worthy of the noblest heroes.

## Why They Come

In a *PLANESCAPE* campaign, fiends view mortals as insignificant insects. However, belief is all-powerful on the Outer Planes, and even a fiend can benefit from the beliefs of mortals. If a large enough group of mortals fears and respects a fiend, that fiend's individual power and the overall power of that fiendish race both grow. For this reason alone, there is much for fiends to gain by venturing to the Prime and interacting with mortals.

At the DM's option, fiends in a Prime-based campaign might take a different view of mortals and their value in the universe. Fiends might be the agents of a dark power who has much to gain by winning souls away from following a power of good. Perhaps the campaign world is the battleground between opposing forces of good and evil, and mortals are pawns in the game—or the prize for winning. In a Prime-centered campaign, there is every reason for fiends to journey to the Prime.

Some fiends hope to establish a power base on the Prime by seizing political or religious power. Such fiends might usurp the throne of a kingdom and wage a war of conquest across the planet, or collect worshipers and form a secret cult to conduct vile rites in the fiend's honor. In either case, the fiend benefits from the widespread belief in its power, in much the same way as a Power benefits from having mortal worshipers.

Other fiends come with the explicit purpose of corrupting the more-or-less innocent mortals so that their spirits will eventually end up in the lower planes rather than the upper. Succubi, glabrezu, and erinyes are the most common seducers of mortals, but any kind of fiend might operate in this manner, hoping to win more bodies for the ranks of its side in the Blood War, or more points for its infernal master in the cosmic game against good. Most fiends (demons and devils) in Western myth and legend are tempters and corrupters of mortals, rather than flesh-rending behemoths.

Finally, some fiends come to the Prime because mortals are foolish enough to summon them there. However, in most cases, any fiend but the most lowly guardian yugoloth or hordling who responds to a mortal's summoning brings its own hidden agenda. Most powerful fiends can freely ignore most summoning attempts. Therefore, mortal wizards would be wise to question why the fiend they've summoned did not choose to ignore the summoning—there is usually a profit motive involved. Of course, if all mortal wizards were wise, they would never attempt to summon fiends in the first place.

## Common Powers

Once a fiend is on the Prime, it has certain powers that prove useful in pursuit of its purpose. Most fiends share certain powers in common, though the specific form of a power (*advanced illusion* or *alter self*, for example) might vary among different fiend types. The powers most useful for a fiend's purposes of corruption include changing its appearance, communicating mentally, influencing mortal minds, and creating illusions. Most of these powers are innate spell-like abilities that a fiend can use at will—every round, if necessary—to overcome a victim's defenses. In addition, some fiends

have additional magical powers, learned and studied in the same way as mortal wizards learn their craft, and others might possess psionic abilities.

## Shifting Appearance

*The devil hath power  
to assume a pleasing shape.*

—William Shakespeare

It's hard to manipulate a person who is running away, howling in terror. For this simple reason, fiends usually prefer to disguise their true appearance when dealing with mortals. Most fiends—all baatezu and yugoloths, and many tanar'ri—have some way to appear human or at least become *invisible*. Whatever method they use, fiends tend to assume a pleasing or at least innocuous appearance when engaging in subtle manipulation of mortal prey. The succubus and erinyes, of course, are fond of appearing as attractive members of the opposite sex to their victims. This is a common tactic among other fiends as well, as they find mortals' wills much weaker in the presence of such a form. Other fiends might disguise themselves as strong and noble leaders, harmless peasants, or innocent children. Some choose to appear as animals and serve as pets to their intended quarry. Any disguise that lowers a mortal's mental defenses is a likely choice for a fiend on a mission of corruption. Since many fiends have the ability to read their victim's minds, they often take the time to determine what disguise will put a potential victim most at ease.

**Illusions:** All baatezu have the innate spell-like ability of *advanced illusion*, as do arcanaloths and the fiendlike gray and death slaadi. Though the spell description in the *Player's Handbook* does not explicitly allow it, fiends can use this ability as a more powerful *change self*, cloaking their true appearance behind a more pleasing façade. The comprehensive *illusion* masks the fiend's true nature to all human senses, even infravision (as it includes thermal components). The sole weakness of this disguise is the possibility that a victim successfully disbelieves the *illusion*. To prevent this, fiends (especially baatezu) make liberal use of *suggestion* to convince humans of the disguise, preventing them from ever doubting the fiend's identity



Sometimes it pays to cast a *detect evil* spell before rescuing the princess.

long enough to disbelieve. Fiends with *ESP* ability constantly monitor the thoughts of those in their presence to ensure that they do not question the fiend's nature. Arcanaloths and gray slaadi, who possess neither *suggestion* nor *ESP*, tend to prefer their *shapechange* ability to cloak their own appearance.

In addition to the powerful magic of *advanced illusion*, some fiends have lesser illusory abilities to disguise themselves. Abishai and spinagon baatezu, as well as bar-lgura tanar'ri, can use *change self*—a thin cloak, best suited to brief public appearances rather than prolonged masquerades. The possibility that a mortal might disbelieve the illusion or stumble upon the truth by touching the tanar'ri leads most abishai and spinagons to rely on *advanced illusion*, while bar-lgura tend to prefer simply rending their victims to shreds.

**Shapechange:** A number of fiends can actually alter their physical bodies to appear human or otherwise innocuous. Among the baatezu, erinyes, gelugons,

and pit fiends can use *polymorph self* to alter their forms. Babau, cambion, and marilith tanar'ri share this ability, while alu-fiends and succubi can use *shape change*. Yochlol can assume human or elven form, while maurezhi have the ability to appear as one of their victims. Nalfeshnee tanar'ri and all yugoloths can *alter self*, while arcanaloths and nycaloths have more powerful shapechanging abilities (*shape change* and *polymorph self*, respectively). Even imps and quasits can *polymorph* into animal forms to disguise their true nature, and fiendlike creatures including barghests, night hags, and slaadi share similar abilities.

*Alter self* is usually sufficient for a fiend's purposes in deceiving humanity. The largest of fiends, however, including the nalfeshnee and perhaps the yugoloth, might find the size limitation of this ability (up to 50% alteration in size) too restrictive—a nalfeshnee can become no smaller than 10 feet tall! There is otherwise little difference between the three shape-altering powers when a fiend

seeks merely to appear in human form. Shapechanging magic has an advantage over illusion in that there is no possibility for disbelief—the transformation is real. In all cases, the fiend retains its full mental faculties, hit points, spell-like powers, and magic resistance.

**Invisibility:** The next best thing to appearing harmless is not appearing at all. In some cases, *invisibility* has distinct advantages over disguise. The ability to become invisible is shared by erinyes, osyluths, pit fiends, all gehreleths, gray and death slaadi, bar-lgura, maurezhi, molydei, nalfeshnee, arcanaloths, and nycaloths. *Invisibility* allows a fiend to create disembodied voices, make inanimate objects move, and attack with surprise. Pit fiends and molydei can even attack while remaining invisible, driving their victims to fits of terror.

**Deep cover:** Fiends who fear discovery of their true nature on particularly important missions might take greater measures to conceal themselves, cloaking not just their physical forms but also their thoughts, even their auras. Magical items such as a *ring of mind shielding* or *amulet of proof vs. detection and location* can help to facilitate this charade.

In the mist-shrouded lands of the RAVENLOFT setting, undead with Low or better Intelligence have the unique ability to project false thoughts as proof against mental scrying. Fiends should possess this ability in any campaign world (except, possibly, a PLANESCAPE campaign). Thus, any attempt to read the thoughts of a fiend—including magical or psionic *ESP*—actually detects only the false projection of surface thoughts, invariably safe and reassuring. A fiend can choose at any time to drop the façade of false thoughts, however, exposing an invading mind to a torrent of twisted, nightmarish images and threatening the intruder with utter madness.

## Mental Communication

*You're just jealous  
because the voices are talking to me.*

—anonymous bumper sticker

All baatezu and tanar'ri have the ability, common among outer-planar denizens, to communicate with any sentient creature by using a special form of telepathy. This way, language is never a barrier to a fiend's manipulations—they can express

themselves fluently in any tongue. Any fiend can choose to mentally “translate” its thought-projected voice into spoken language to maintain a human disguise that seems to speak normally.

A fiend's telepathy allows for more sinister manipulations than just overcoming language barriers, however. Even when a fiend chooses to speak, its mind is in constant contact with those to whom it is speaking. If a fiend desires, it can mentally project connotations that subtly alter or shade the meaning of its words. For example, a glabrezu working on a mortal warrior might subtly project shades of meaning that conjure images of battlefield glory, opulent splendor, and tyrannical authority in the victim's mind. By manipulating his emotions, the glabrezu can make the warrior more susceptible to the temptation of power. Similarly, few mortals can hold their ground when a fiend threatens them, as insidious images of hellfire seem to creep into their minds around the fiend's spoken words.

Fiends with this form of telepathy can also use it to push their victims toward madness. Some fiends cloak themselves in invisibility or an animal disguise and pester their victims with intrusive thoughts, a disembodied voice that makes harmful suggestions, offers twisted observations, or mocks the victim's actions and even thoughts. When a mortal experiences these “voices” in her mind, she normally either associates them with a divine command, begins to question her sanity, or both. The victim gradually loses the ability to distinguish her own thoughts from the fiend's.

In game terms, the victim of this kind of “gaslighting” attempt must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation, counting the Magical Defense Adjustment based on her Wisdom score, at the end of each full week. (In the RAVENLOFT setting, use a Madness check instead.) Other circumstances can impose bonuses or penalties to this saving throw, at the DM's discretion. Failing the saving throw causes the victim to slip into a temporary state of insanity appropriate to the nature of the voices. The victim might suffer from delusions or hallucinations, or become paranoid or schizophrenic, as she comes to believe what the voices have been whispering. Adjudicating this madness

is up to the DM. Ordinarily, the victim will not recover full use of her faculties until the fiend stops tormenting her and she receives the ministrations of a *heal* or *restoration* spell or psionic *psychic surgery*.

In addition to this fundamental form of telepathic communication, a number of fiends have the ability to read mortal thoughts via *ESP*. Cornugon baatezu, all gehreleths, alu-fiend, molydeus, nalfeshnee, succubus, and yochlol tanar'ri, ultroloths, and green and death slaadi all possess some form of *ESP*. In the case of nalfeshnee, the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® supplement specifies that this power is always active—but in fact, all fiends that can use the power tend to do so constantly, at least when dealing with mortals. (A yochlol's *ESP* ability is psionic, so she cannot maintain it indefinitely.)

This constant thought monitoring makes it almost impossible for mortals to deceive or keep secrets from a fiend. When roleplaying a fiend with *ESP*, it is safe to assume that the fiend knows everything that the DM does about the PCs' actions and intentions. If PCs harbor doubts or suspicions about the fiend, the fiend certainly is aware of them. PCs who are actively trying to shield their mind from any probing can attempt a saving throw vs. spell (Wisdom adjustment applies), but success only forces the fiend to try again after 2–5 (1d4+1) rounds. Magical items like a *ring of mind shielding*, spells like *nondetection*, or psionic powers like *mind blank* can all prevent *ESP* and keep a fiend in the dark. However, a fiend always knows when it is unable to read someone's mind, and it naturally treats such a person with greater caution.

## Charms and Suggestions

*I can resist anything  
except temptation.*

—Oscar Wilde

As masters of deception and corruption, many fiends have magical powers of influence and control, including *charm person* and *suggestion*. When used against PCs, these powers require special handling, particularly where saving throws are concerned.

When a mortal interacts with, say, a succubus, the fiend's every word—more, every facial expression and bodily gesture—is a *suggestion* and a *charm*. Her

communication is an intricate, subtle blend of speech, body language, and telepathy that slides her influence beneath and around every defense of her potential victim. These creatures weave webs of deceit and influence around their hapless prey until reality, for the victim, becomes exactly what the succubus says it is. In the context of the game, however, a player most likely cannot adequately roleplay this situation if the DM asks him to roll a saving throw for his character every round. Players become suspicious when they have to roll saving throws, while PCs are not suspicious at all if they fail those saving throws.

The DM, therefore, should roll most if not all saving throws against a fiend's powers of influence. Finding a way to do this without the obvious clue of plastic hitting the table can help to keep the players from discovering the true situation. A pad of stick-on notes, prepared before the game with a random d20 roll on each note, can be an effective alternative random-number generator.

**Charms:** All baatezu can *charm person* at will, and the erinyes has an enhanced version of this power. In addition, alu-fiends, charismatic cambions, glabrezu, molydei, succubi, and yochlol can *charm person*, as can all yugoloths and barghests. Vrocks can *mass charm*, affecting up to 20 levels or Hit Dice of victims at once. A shator gehreleth can beguile its victims, as if using a *rod of beguiling*. The effects are similar to a *mass charm*, but it instills an even deeper level of trust and respect for the shator than a *charm* would.

*Charmed* mortals regard the fiend with trust and goodwill, viewing it as an ally or even a friend. Victims are under no magical compulsion to obey the fiend's wishes, but they naturally respond to the fiend asking a favor exactly as they would respond to any other trusted friend asking the same favor. They might question the nature of the request, argue heatedly with the fiend about it, or even express shock that their friend would suggest such a thing, but they always view the request in the best possible light. Never underestimate mortal powers of rationalization! Most humans are quite capable of a line of reasoning such as, "She's my friend, so she must be a decent person. She must have been joking when she suggested that I kill that irritating guard."



A few words whispered into the right ear can cause more damage than an army of fiends.

**Suggestions:** As with *charm*, all baatezu can use *suggestion* at will, as can alu-fiends, balors, molydei, succubi, and baernoloths. Imps can use this power once per day, and ultroloths have the frightening power of *mass suggestion*. A baernoloth can use *demand* to impart a *suggestion* to a victim far removed from its own location, even another plane.

Fiends can use this power to suggest not just a course of action but a way of seeing the world. Imagine, for example, a succubus in human guise whose *ESP* reveals that her human victim is harboring doubts about the fiend's true nature. The succubus picks a scapegoat—a heroic and virtuous paladin—and starts trying to persuade the victim that the paladin is a fiend in disguise. Under the influence of the tanar'ri's *suggestion*, the paladin's piety begins to look forced, his laugh hides a touch of cruelty, and his eyes seem to reveal the wicked thoughts working behind them.

Consider this situation as it plays out around the gaming table. The fiend and her mortal victim are watching the paladin from across the room. As the paladin laughs, the fiend offhandedly mentions a

grating quality about the laugh. The victim's player asks the DM, "Did I notice anything about his laugh?" Rolling the victim's saving throw in secret and finding a failure, the DM says, "Actually, yes. It does sort of grate on your nerves." As the victim looks at the paladin with new eyes, the paladin returns the gaze, crinkling his brow in consternation to find someone eyeing him so suspiciously. Some time later, the fiend mentions to the player, "Did you see the way he looked at you? I could almost see the daggers flash from his eyes." Again the DM rolls the saving throw secretly and informs the player that this squares with his memory, as well. During this whole process, the fiend monitors her victim's thoughts with *ESP* to gauge her progress.

To reflect a fiend's powerful influence, characters who are under a fiend's *charm* should suffer a -2 penalty to their saving throws against the same fiend's *suggestion*. The *charm* automatically makes any *suggestion* seem more reasonable.

**Important Note:** Generally, a fiend's purpose involves corrupting mortals and seducing them toward evil. However, a mortal who commits an evil act

while under the influence of a *charm* or *suggestion* has not turned far enough toward evil—the magical influence lessens the actual evil of the act. Even so, inducing mortals to perform acts of evil through magic can be a useful first step toward their ultimate damnation. Once the deed is done, the fiend has a stronger foothold for later temptation—“There now, that wasn’t so bad, was it? Didn’t it feel good?” Thus, an evil act performed under magical compulsion is often the first step down the slippery slope to hell.

## Illusions

*A pleasant illusion  
is better than a harsh reality.*

—Christian Nestell Bovee

With fiends, even more so than in ordinary circumstances, nothing is ever as it seems. Baatezu are the undisputed masters of illusion. Every baatezu can create an *advanced illusion* at will, and they use this power to tremendous advantage in their dealings with mortals. Similarly, all yugoloths can use *improved phantasmal force*, which lacks only in duration and certain sensory elements. Arcanaloths and gray and death slaadi can also use *advanced illusion*. Among the tanar’ri, only the beastlike bar-lgura have any illusory ability at all, the respectable *spectral force*.

Baatezu use illusions in much the same way as they use *suggestions*, and sometimes they use both powers in conjunction. With the help of illusion, a mortal victim quite literally sees things as the baatezu wants him to, and *suggestion* can prevent him from questioning what he sees. If the succubus in the example above were instead a cornugon cloaked behind an *advanced illusion*, its attempt to discredit the virtuous paladin would be even simpler. The victim actually would hear a hollowness in the paladin’s laugh, see a look of hellish fury cross his face, or even notice how his canine teeth are preternaturally long. Naturally, other people in the room might notice the same things. Reinforced with the fiend’s *suggestions*, even a strong-willed victim quickly believes whatever the fiend wishes. If a victim fails a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the *suggestion* in this context, she might not attempt to disbelieve the illusion.

Fiends also use their powers of illusion to make bargains with mortals, offering what amounts to smoke and mirrors in exchange for the mortal’s service, life, or soul. A woman who wishes for beauty can have her wish quite easily—though only for a short time (the fiend’s Hit Dice in rounds, or at least 5 rounds, for *advanced illusion*). The area of effect of *advanced illusion* is sufficient to create quite elaborate ruses. A 13-HD pit fiend, for example, could create an illusory palace 170 feet square, while even a less powerful creature can easily fill a room with phantasmal treasure. The legalistic baatezu simply offer “all this” in exchange for whatever it is they want from the mortal, and though “all this” may turn out to be exactly nothing, the mortal is still bound by the letter of the agreement.

## Learned Magic

*All nations were deceived  
by your sorcery.*

—Revelation 18:23

In addition to their formidable array of innate spell-like abilities, some fiends can learn and cast spells in the same way as mortal wizards or priests. Tanar’ri half-breeds like cambions and alu-fiends are the most likely to have spell ability, but in theory any fiend with an Intelligence score over 11 is capable of learning to use wizard or priest magic. Roughly half of the fiends that become wizards do so only by sacrificing some of their own inherent magical ability—either eliminating their magic resistance or giving up 1d6 of their innate spell-like abilities. The other half, though, learn magic in addition to their intrinsic abilities—and of those, a few have even learned to replace an innate ability with a different power.

Fiends can rise to a spellcasting level equal to their Hit Dice or the level at which they cast their innate abilities, whichever is higher. In rare cases, evil powers allow their fiendish priests to rise as high as twice that level, and certain fiendish races (balors, pit fiends, and alu-fiends) are capable of attaining much greater levels as wizards. Among the baatezu, there are more wizards than priests—they take to such arcane magic easily, while the masters of the baatezu race tend to frown on their followers

offering service to godly powers. The reverse is true of tanar’ri, who often become priests of Abyssal lords such as Baphomet, Demogorgon, Juiblex, and Yeenoghu, but less often take to wizardly magic. A few yugoloths become wizards, but this fiendish race has no priests.

Fiend wizards whose interests lie on the Prime often specialize in the schools of Illusion/Phantasm or Enchantment/Charm. They use the spells in these schools in much the same way as their innate powers of illusion and charm—to deceive and tempt mortals, as well as to cloak their identities. Fiend priests, of course, use the spells their dark masters bestow on them with a degree of subtlety (or the lack thereof) appropriate to their master’s sphere of influence.

For more information on fiendish spellcasters, see “The Dark of the War” in the *Hellbound* boxed set.

## Psionics

*Just because it’s all in my head  
doesn’t mean it’s not real.*

—anonymous

The *Complete Psionics Handbook* details psionic powers for fiends, continuing a tradition from the AD&D® 1st Edition game. The fiend descriptions in the *PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* books do not include these abilities (except for the yochlol tanar’ri), but fiends might still possess them. Like learned magic, psionics might be limited to a few individuals, or they might be common to all members of certain fiendish varieties. Psionics can duplicate magical effects, including cloaking a fiend’s appearance (*metamorphosis*, *false sensory input*), mental eavesdropping or communication (*mindlink*, *probe*, *ESP*, *send thoughts*), and mental control (*domination*, *mass domination*, *control body*). Psionic powers also include a broader and subtler range of mind-influencing effects, including *attraction*, *aversion*, *awe*, *phobia amplification*, and *repugnance*. *Psychic impersonation* can make a fiend’s disguise almost impenetrable.

Among the baatezu, the greater races (including amnizu, cornugon, gelugon, and pit fiend) might all possess psionic powers, focusing on the telepathic powers of control (though *inflict pain* is another favorite). Their effective psioni-

cist level is one lower than their Hit Dice. Only a few tanar'ri—all the true races but vrocks, as well as babaus, succubi, and of course yochlol—can master psionics, and their effective level is three less than their Hit Dice. They tend to learn psychometabolic powers such as *metamorphosis* to make up for their general lack of shapechanging abilities, as well as telepathic powers. Among the yugoloths, only arcanaloths can master psionics. They are treated as 13th-level psionicians.

Any time a mortal experiences direct mental contact with an alien mind such as a fiend's, the unfortunate mortal runs the risk of madness. When a mortal psionician tries to read a fiend's mind, he is normally protected by the shield of false thoughts the fiend projects (see above). If the fiend chooses to drop this false mental camouflage, or if a fiend with psionic ability imposes its thoughts on a mortal mind, the mortal must roll a saving throw vs. paralyzation (Wisdom bonus applies) or fall into madness. (In the RAVENLOFT setting, use a Madness check instead.) The DM must adjudicate the effects of this insanity. Fiends using *send thoughts* can choose whether to send thoughts that would force a Madness check on their victim. *Switch personality* forces the victim who now inhabits a fiend's body to make a Madness check.

## Uncommon Powers

As if this formidable array of common powers weren't enough, the DM might allow fiends access to additional abilities to aid in their missions of corrupting mortals. These abilities help to take fiends beyond the numbers and special abilities on the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM page and into the realm of utter horror and unspeakable evil where they belong. Of course, they are completely optional rules that the DM can use or disregard as best fits the campaign.

## Signs and Wonders

*Wonder is the basis of worship.*

—Thomas Carlyle

A favorite tactic among fiends who walk the Prime is the establishment of evil cults. A network of crazed cultists is not only a useful tool in spreading destruction and moral turpitude though a Prime world but also a source of the much-desired



Even when revealed for what they are, fiends on the Prime plane are the most dangerous foes.

power of worship to the fiend or its lower-planar master. To establish a cult in a fantasy setting, however, a fiend must be able to offer at least a taste of what all the other gods grant: power. The high priest of the demon-worshipping temple must be able to cast spells that manifest his evil master's abhorrent nature at the PCs who interrupt his detestable rites and sacrifices.

There are three ways to handle that priest's spellcasting ability in the framework of the game. First, any lowly fiend can bestow certain spells on a mortal who worships it. The spells an ordinary fiend can bestow are limited to its innate abilities, which are all considered priest spells for this purpose. For example, a 5th-level human priest who serves a cornugon could choose his daily allotment of spells from the following formidable repertoire: (first level) *charm person*, *detect magic*; (second level) *ESP*, *know alignment*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*; (third level) *animate dead*, *infravision*, *lightning bolt*, *suggestion*. These spells are all learned and cast as any other priest spell.

Second, a fiend priest can channel spellcasting ability to a mortal from its

fiendish master. A fiend priest can "sponsor" a mortal priest up to its own priest level in this way. So a 5th-level human priest who serves a 7th-level tanar'ri priest of Demogorgon has access to the tanar'ri's full complement of spells, chosen from the spheres that Demogorgon grants his own priests access to (major access to All, Combat, Divination, Healing, Necromantic, Sun; minor access to Animal, Chaos, Guardian, Protection, Summoning). If a 7th-level human priest served a tanar'ri who had reached only 5th level as a priest, he would not be able to cast 4th-level spells, since they are unavailable to his patron.

Finally, nonpriest fiends can set up cults that serve not themselves, but their more powerful masters on the Lower Planes. The human priests, then, gain spells directly from an evil deity, Abyssal Lord, or Lord of the Nine.

Whatever the source, the spell ability bestowed on a cult leader serves to strengthen the belief and obedience of the cult members. Belief and obedience both contribute to the fiend's overall power both in the Prime and back home on the Lower Planes.

## Fiends in the Campaign

Surrounded by cults, armed with new powers, and putting old powers to new use, fiends can be among the most powerful adversaries PCs can fear to meet. A fiend can also be an unbalancing force in your campaign unless handled carefully. For best effect, a fiend should be a rare, even unique opponent that remains behind the scenes, almost completely out of the reach of the PCs over the course of many adventures or even a whole campaign. The PCs might find themselves regularly thwarting the fiend's schemes in what they had thought were unrelated quests. A charmed minion here, a fanatical cult there—each might pursue one facet of the fiend's goals, a tiny part of an intricately complex whole.

In this kind of scenario, a fiend's powers are directed primarily at NPCs, not at the PCs themselves. NPCs are *charmed* or *possessed*, sell their souls for power, or form demon-worshipping cults—these are not the actions of heroes. It is the task of a hero to help those who suffer under a fiend's control, to liberate their bodies and souls from its domination, and to destroy those who have given themselves entirely over to evil. This does not mean that the PCs can hope to avoid any taint of evil, for, as Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "When you look long into the Abyss, the Abyss looks also into you." The quest to destroy a fiend—or at least to break its hold and send it away—is an epic undertaking, dangerous to mind, body, and spirit alike. But—as always in a game of heroic fantasy—good triumphs over evil in the end, and the heroes should emerge from the fray with their souls at least intact.

## Bargaining Chips

*Power will intoxicate the best hearts.*

—Charles Caleb Colton

Fiends don't bestow power just on cult leaders. One of the greatest temptations they offer to mortals is power. Faust sold his soul for magical power, while others have made the same bargain to win gold, love, or other desirable goals. With mental powers such as ESP, fiends are masters at offering mortal victims exactly

what they most want or think they need, at just the right time.

Imagine a thief working intently to disarm a dangerous trap. The DM smiles grimly as the dice for this Remove Traps roll show a failure: in her haste, the thief makes a fatal mistake. Her eyes open wide as a tiny needle shoots out of the trap, and her hand grows instantly numb as the poison begins to take effect (another failed roll, this time on the saving throw). As the certainty of approaching death dawns on the thief, a voice whispers into her mind: "Say the word, and you will survive this poison. All I ask in return is a small favor." As the thief quickly assents, the *invisible* fiend makes a small transformation in the thief's body, not only making her immune to poison but also making her bite poisonous like a snake's. As the magnitude of what's happened begins to sink in, the fiend ends its *invisibility* and lays down its request... While the thief shudders in horror at what she's been asked to do, the fiend casually mentions the side effects of the character's poisonous bite, for no fiendish "gift" comes without a cost.

At the DM's discretion, fiends might effect transformations in mortals who willingly agree to them, as in this example. In the terms of the RAVENLOFT setting, the mortal automatically fails one or more Powers checks and slides farther along the path to corruption. In any setting, the fiend simply acts as the negotiator in what is essentially a bargain with evil itself. Evil grants extraordinary abilities to the weak-willed or foolish mortal, but the individual's body and spirit are irrevocably altered as a result. (See "The Price of Power," below.)

Fiends can offer increasing abilities to cooperative mortals, leading them onward toward ultimate darkness until they are completely transformed into a monster—perhaps a lycanthrope or undead creature. At that point, the fiend gains its reward from evil—the soul of its mortal victim.

This ability to broker bargains with the ultimate forces of evil is perhaps the greatest ability of a fiend to facilitate the temptation and corruption of mortals. In exchange for this kind of power, mortals are willing to commit vile acts, bringing them to the brink of damnation.

As a rule, only the greatest of fiends (greater baatezu, true tanar'ri, and greater yugoloths) can bestow dramatic powers. The RAVENLOFT *Domains of Dread* book describes possible changes that might result from a failed Powers check. Other possibilities, reflecting the classic diabolical bargains for power, wealth, immortality, and love, include:

- ✱ The mortal gains the spellcasting ability of a 3rd-level wizard.
- ✱ The victim's Charisma becomes 18, and he gains the ability to *charm person* at will.
- ✱ The character gains one level in her chosen class.
- ✱ The victim's Strength becomes 18/00, and he can use the powers of a *rod of rulership* once per day.
- ✱ The character becomes 10 years younger.
- ✱ The mortal's touch turns any mineral substance to gold.

## The Price of Power

*Sometimes one pays most  
for the things one gets for nothing.*

—Albert Einstein

Any power bestowed by a fiend comes with a price—actually, two prices. First is the "favor" a fiend demands before granting any gift. Fiends often leave this end of the bargain open-ended, especially if their chosen victims are desperate enough to agree to anything (as in the example of the poisoned thief above). In this case, the victim simply promises to grant the fiend a favor at some future time, whenever the fiend should ask for it. Without exception, these poor fools are horrified and appalled at the nature of the request when the fiend finally calls in the favor. It might be as simple as murdering a prominent local figure, or as grisly as cutting out a loved one's heart in sacrifice to the fiend.

The second price is an integral part of the power bestowed. To gain anything in a bargain with a fiend, a mortal must give up some portion of her humanity, her soul. As with RAVENLOFT powers checks, fiend-granted powers have side effects, a serious drawback that offsets the power of the gift and represents the loss of a portion of the soul. Our thief with the poisonous bite, who enjoys complete immunity to toxic substances,

will soon discover that her teeth are growing longer, like the fangs of a viper, and her tongue has become forked. Her hissing speech and prominent fangs cause normal humans to treat her like a monster, and she is no longer welcome in polite society.

It would be hard to argue that fiends are not fair, however. Generally, the price of any power a fiend bestows is proportional to its magnitude. Greater power comes at a greater cost, both in terms of the favor the fiend demands and in terms of its side effects. Again, *Domains of Dread* describes appropriate side effects for each change resulting from a failed Powers check. Possible costs for the powers suggested above include:

- ✱ For the mortal who has gained magical power: He now ages at an accelerated rate, 10 years for every year that passes. As his intellect increases, his body withers into dust.

- ✱ For the victim who has become most charming: Anyone who makes a successful saving throw against his *charm person* power views him as if his Charisma were 3. He looks like a filthy, leering wretch to such people.

- ✱ For the character who enjoys a sudden level increase: All experience awards she earns subsequently are reduced by 30%.

- ✱ For the victim with great Strength and rulership: His Intelligence score drops by 1 each time he uses his leadership ability. He soon becomes a hulking brute with the ability to lead an angry mob.

- ✱ For the character in search of youth: The character continues to get younger, aging backward instead of forward. Each year, she grows another year younger until she ages "back" to nonexistence.

- ✱ For the mortal with the Midas touch: He becomes so avaricious that he refuses to spend any of his money. Though he commands limitless riches, he cannot bring himself to buy anything—and might starve unless he receives the unlikely charity of others.

## Demonic Possession


*He has a demon and is out of his mind.*

—John 10:20

Possession—when a fiend inhabits a mortal body, taking control of its every action—is a common tactic of the tanar'ri. According to *Faces of Evil: The Fiends*, baatezu could use magic to do the same thing if they wanted to, but they prefer subtler approaches. True tanar'ri accomplish possession through an innate ability similar to the *magic jar* spell.

Unlike using the *magic jar* spell, a true tanar'ri does not have to displace its life force into a special receptacle before possessing a mortal victim. Instead, it simply touches the victim and, if the attempt is successful, shifts its life force directly into the victim's body, while its own physical form disappears. (The tanar'ri's body reforms when its life force leaves the victim's body for any reason.) The life force of the victim remains in the body, but it is completely powerless to act in any way.

The intended victim receives a saving throw vs. spell to resist the possession attempt, modified based on the relative Intelligence and Wisdom scores of the tanar'ri and the victim, as with *magic jar*. If the possession attempt is successful, the tanar'ri gains complete control over the body of the victim, including acquired knowledge such as languages, proficiencies, class abilities, and memorized spells. The tanar'ri uses its own THACO, magic resistance, and spell-like abilities, while the body retains its hit points, Armor Class, and other physical properties. Killing the body forces the tanar'ri out but, of course, also kills the mortal victim.

Once in control of a mortal body, what a fiend does with it varies from individual to individual. Some fiends, as described in *Faces of Evil*, simply use the mortal body to wreak as much chaos and destruction as they can, experiencing the carnage and debauchery much more intensely because of the nature of mortal flesh. Others use their mortal hosts as part of a much more insidious plot of corruption. In either case, the mortal victim never feels clean or safe again. 

*One of James' campaigns revolves around a demonic invasion of a Prime plane world. Combining elements of the PLANESCAPE and RAVENLOFT settings, and Camelot, Night has a home on the Web, which you can find at <http://aquela.com/roleplaying/Night/>.*

# Gamer's Guide



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# Greyhawk Grimoires Zagig's Comedicon

For the prankster  
wizard, a collection  
of spells designed  
not to harm  
but to humiliate.

**Z**AGIG YRAGERNE ... MAD ARCHMAGE OF OERTH, creator of Castle Greyhawk, builder of demiplanes, and prisoner of gods. Even initiates to the GREYHAWK® setting know Zagig's name (and its variations), for it is scattered throughout campaign material as well as the AD&D® game in general. What most have not known—until now—are the contents of one of the mad wizard's spellbooks.

## Zagig's Comedicon

It has been rumored that the spell tomes of the Mad Archmage Zagig Yragerne were recovered from Greyhawk Castle long ago and now rest mostly untouched in a secured vault within Greyhawk City's Guild of Wizardry. This might or might not be true, but one fact is undeniable: If Zagig's spellbooks are being held in the guildhall, it certainly isn't the entire collection.

This latter fact came to light in 576 CY when the sage-wizard Ansalor of Westkeep, a long time collector of both magical and mundane oddities, recovered one of these tomes from the depths of Greyhawk Castle and returned with it to his native city in the Hold of the Sea Princes.

For nearly a year thereafter, Ansalor remained sequestered in his tower to study and ponder the work. Through his studies, he discovered that the tome carried a peculiar enchantment that frequently rearranged the order in which the pages appeared. This frustrated Ansalor to no end, as it required him to spend most of his time simply trying to

puzzle through the tome's everchanging contents. By 578 CY, he had become so disgusted with his inability to make an accurate record of the book, he turned it over to one of his frequent clients: the wizard Drawmij.

Drawmij possessed the *Comedicon* for a number of years but, like Ansalor, he had difficulties with it. Eventually, he returned it to the sage who, not surprisingly, wasn't particularly glad to get it back. Unwilling to go through the torment of untangling the book a second time, Ansalor packed it away, and there it remained until the Greyhawk Wars.

When the Scarlet Brotherhood entered the fray and conquered the Hold of the Sea Princes, Ansalor was forced to flee Westkeep in haste, having little choice but to leave behind most of his valuables. Strangely, the *Comedicon* was one of the few items he brought with him, despite his loathing for it.

By the time Ansalor reached the relative safety of Keoland, he had decided to travel to Greyhawk and give the book to the city's Guild of Wizardry. When he



by  
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illustrated by  
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reached Greyhawk, however, the wizard made a shocking discovery. Upon opening the locked and magically warded chest in which the book was stored, he found not the *Comedicon* but a slab of limestone cut to a size similar to that of the book. To this day, Ansolor remains confounded by the tome's disappearance, insisting that there was no way someone could have stolen it without him knowing, as the warding spells on the chest would have warned him of any pilfering attempts.

As might be expected, the current whereabouts of *Zagig's Comedicon* are unknown. Ansolor cautions would-be seekers not to confuse the *Comedicon* with Zagig's spellbooks said to be held by Greyhawk's Guild of Wizardry. Those works, if they truly exist, most certainly involve Zagig's more potent incantations, such as the spells he used to construct Greyhawk Castle, imprison immortal beings, create demiplanes, and so forth. The *Comedicon*, on the other hand, is not nearly so profound or potentially world-shaking, so interested parties should not expect the Guild to have the answers they seek.

### Appearance

The *Comedicon* is a hefty volume and, in most respects, is constructed in a manner quite common among spell tomes, being approximately 20 inches tall, 12 inches wide, and 4 inches thick. The materials from which it is fashioned are not so common, however.

The covers are composed of deep blue crystal, smooth as glass and slightly translucent, but as hard as a diamond and as strong as adamantite. The spine, also composed of the strange blue material, is connected to the covers via platinum hinges. Attached to, and centered on, the front cover is a 4" platinum disc, its surface raised to form an image of Zagig's plump, aged, laughing face. A similar disc is attached to the back cover, the raised image upon it depicting what most certainly is intended to be a representation of the back of Zagig's head. The book has no other exterior decorations, but a trick-lock clasp of polished platinum secures it when closed.

The pages are made of quality parchment, but they are coated with some

## Zagig's Canned Laughter

(Evocation)

Level: 1

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

For the duration of this spell, any time the caster makes a pun, quip, or jest, even if such jokes are in poor taste or not particularly funny, a chorus of laughter and fond applause erupts from thin air. This fanfare is audible to all creatures within normal hearing range, but only the caster's jokes can induce the uproar. This spell can be ended prematurely with a successful



*dispel magic*, as well as magical silence centered

on the *canned laughter's* caster.

The material components for this spell are a banana peel and a rag doll that has been tarred and feathered. Obviously, this spell is intended for the caster's personal amusement, but a clever wizard might find other uses for it (such as distracting foes, giving the impression of greater numbers, and so on).

## Zagig's Amusing Alteration

(Alteration)

Level: 2

Range: 10 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: One creature

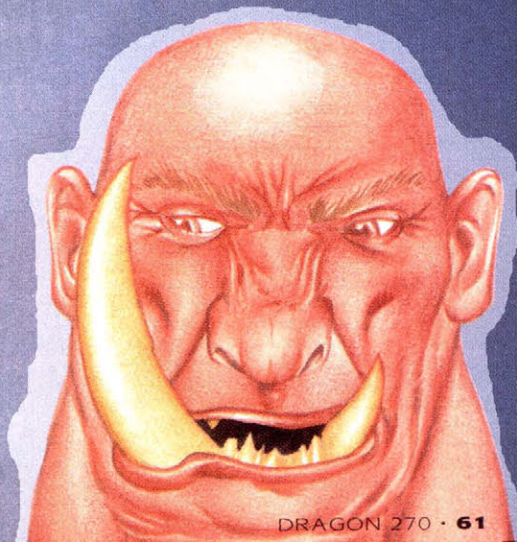
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell allows the caster to alter the size of a single facial feature of the selected target creature. The facial features that can be affected include one eye, one ear, the nose, the chin, the lips, or the forehead. These examples assume the target is generally humanlike, however. Against animals and monsters, the spell can affect other facial features, such as a horn or antler, an eye stalk, a trunk, a tentacle, a crest, a mandible, a proboscis, a beak, or the like.

When the spell is cast, the subject receives a saving throw vs. polymorph and, if successful, the spell fails and is wasted. If the saving throw fails, however, the caster causes the feature to grow to four times its normal size, a condition that lasts for the duration of the spell unless subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or similar effect.

*Zagig's amusing alteration* is not inherently dangerous (no System Shock roll is required), and any harm inflicted

upon the recipient is purely coincidental. For example, an enlarged eyeball is not crushed within its own socket, as the spell bends reality just enough to allow the intended result. However, since the eyeball is enlarged, the likelihood that it might suffer damage from an external force (such as from a weapon blow) is temporarily increased (the DM must decide the exact chances of this occurring), though the eye operates normally otherwise. Similarly, enlarged or reduced lips might affect the victim's ability to speak properly and, therefore, prevent clear communication or spellcasting. In any case, the consequences suffered by a creature subjected to this spell are left to the DM's judgment.



# Zagig's Gender Shift

(Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: Negates

When this spell is cast and the subject creature is touched, the victim must make a successful saving throw vs. polymorph or be instantly transformed into a creature of the same race but of the opposite sex. This change lasts until the victim is subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or another casting of this spell.

Although the change does not inflict damage upon the subject (no System Shock roll is required), it can cause

immediate problems. Physically, clothing and armor will likely become ill-fitting due to the obvious anatomical differences between males and females. This could lead to many troublesome, even embarrassing situations. A swaggering warrior who is suddenly thrown into a situation where he might need to wear a dress and act like a lady; or a dainty, normally timid woman suddenly thrown into the role of a hulking, burly fellow, and so forth.

Zagig's gender shift is totally ineffectual against creatures without gender, such as golems and similar constructs, as well as hermaphrodite creatures like purple worms. Casting the spell against such creatures simply wastes the magic.

The material component for this spell is a live earthworm.

kind of sparkling, silvery substance, almost like paint. The runic inscriptions thereon appear to have been etched by scratching away the silver coating, though attempts to scrape away more of the material proves futile. Finally, the pages are secured to the spine by no less than a score of coin-sized platinum rings.

## Contents


Zagig's *Comedicon* contains a thoroughly disorganized yet fairly generous selection of spells—assuming, of course, one can find them. The book itself bears a chaotic dweomer that, at random intervals, causes the spell pages to shuffle within it each time it is closed. Even more disturbing is when a page simply vanishes from the book, only to be replaced by a completely new page with a different spell. These vanishing pages eventually return to replace other pages, however, forming an endless cycle of vanishing and reappearing pages. Fortunately, this page-shuffling never occurs while the book is open and in use.

In addition to the page-shuffling, there is a 1% noncumulative chance each day that the entire book will simply vanish, only to be replaced by a limestone slab of equal size and weight as the *Comedicon*. The book itself is instantly transported back into the depths of Greyhawk Castle (DM's choice of location) via a special form of teleportation. This effect always occurs without notice, and even magical alarms and barriers cannot warn against or prevent it from happening. The only way to ensure that the *Comedicon* does not vanish on its own is to keep it within an area that prevents the operation of all magic, such as an *anti-magic shell* or a *dead magic zone* (which, of course, would prevent one from memorizing or copying the spells it contains), as even *anti-teleport* magic is insufficient.

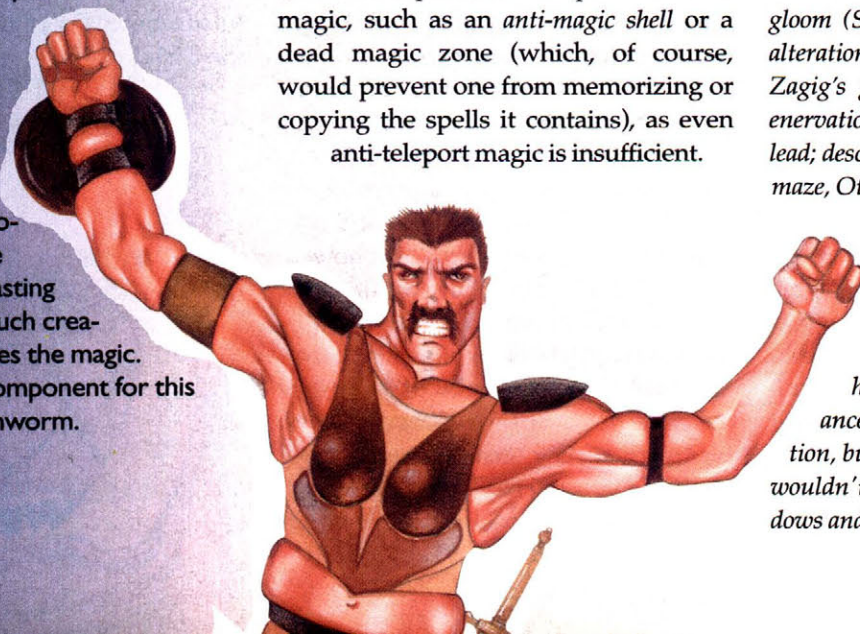
But that is not all. Interspersed among the spell pages is a seemingly endless collection of quips, puns, and whimsical sonnets, the usual fare something along the lines of: "A cleric, a druid, and a shaman walk into a tavern ..." On occasion, however, a reader discovers a passage that, although comical in meter, actually provides something of substance and, in some cases, prophecy. For example, one such verse reads:

*There once was a wizard I knew  
Whose skin was all azure and blue  
In time he'll come forth  
And look to the north  
To help the world blossom anew*

That particular poem apparently refers to Philidor, the mysterious blue mage of Greyhawk City. Unfortunately, the number of inane verses contained in the book is so mind-boggling, these useful passages tend to be overlooked. Indeed, Zagig's *Comedicon* is a maddening read; a testament to the mind of its author.

In any case, most of the spells set down in the book seem to be limited to those that influence the subject's emotions or, as seen through Zagig's eyes, provide comic impetus. Given the chaotic enchantments the book possesses, however, it is no certain thing that all of them are present at any given time, nor that they appear in any particular order. The spells known to be contained in the book (surely an incomplete listing) are as follows: *corpse visage* (Complete Wizard's Handbook), *friends*, *grease*, *Nystul's magic aura*, *spook*, *taunt*, *ventriloquism*, *Zagig's canned laughter\**; *irritation*, *Leomund's trap*, *misdirection*, *scare*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*, *wall of gloom* (Spells & Magic), *Zagig's amusing alteration\**; *fool's speech* (Tome of Magic), *Zagig's gender shift\**; *confusion*, *emotion*, *enervation*, *fear*, *fumble*; *chaos*; *eyebite*, *mislead*; *descent into madness* (Spells & Magic); *maze*, *Otto's irresistible dance*. 

Some readers might have noticed that, until the past few issues, Robert's articles have been mysteriously absent from our pages. We have since learned that his disappearance was the result of an alien abduction, but they brought him back because he wouldn't stop playing with the power windows and the overhead light.





# Armor of the Abyssal Lords

Whether you walk  
the planes or the Prime,  
you need one hell  
of a suit of armor.

**F**ORBIDDEN LORE RELATES THE TALE OF A GREAT WAR between the powers of good and evil, a conflict that raged across the planes in a time when the mortal races were still in their infancy. The war subsided only when it became clear that all of creation was threatened with destruction.

In the course of this apocalypse, the tanar'ri lords of the Abyss required mortal champions on the Prime Material plane to advance their cause. To tempt powerful individuals into service, the lords offered as gifts unique suits of enchanted armor forged by their finest slave-smiths.

Many suits were destroyed or lost during the war and in subsequent ages. It is believed that only thirteen suits survive to this day, their whereabouts unknown. The history of the suits will not be recounted here; it is a long, tedious tale of murder, betrayal, and slaughter.

Except for Lolth the Spider Queen, the Abyssal lords care little for who wears their gifts, so long as they continue to cause strife among mortals. If a suit were destroyed, however, its fiendish lord would know instantly and would likely go to great lengths to find and punish the miscreants responsible.

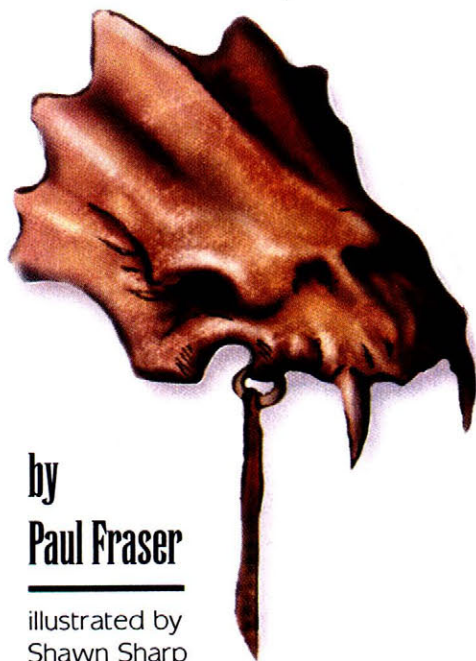
Obtaining a suit of Abyssal armor should constitute an epic quest. The suits are too powerful to spend time gathering dust in treasure vaults. Owners put them to use, either donning the suits themselves or "lending" them to trusted followers to escape the attached curses.

The suits remain as seductive as ever to the powerful and ruthless. As a result, the continual battle for their possession is a contest in which only the "fittest" survive. Player characters seeking a suit, even if only to destroy it, must inevitably face in its current owner a dangerous, determined foe.

Curiously, tanar'ri and other fiends refuse to wear the suits, recognizing their malevolent side effects and proving most unwilling to become entangled in the machinations of a tanar'ri lord.

If the PCs succeed in wresting a suit from its owner, learning precisely how to destroy it requires strenuous efforts. (See *banes*, below.) Effecting its destruction is still more daunting a task.

The Dungeon Master might decide that some suits have been scattered into pieces over the millennia, and that all the parts must be assembled for the suit's



by  
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powers to function. At the DM's discretion, certain combinations of pieces might allow the use of some powers.

Each suit should be considered a minor artifact; see the *Book of Artifacts* for general artifact powers. Unless otherwise specified, the suits' powers function at the 10th level of ability. Like other suits of magical armor, those described below are unencumbering. All magically adjust to fit any Medium-sized creature of either sex, unless stated otherwise.

The descriptions below include the following categories: **constant powers**, **invoked powers**, **curses**, and **banes**.

### The Battlemonger


This crude suit of battered lamellar armor is Mongolian in character. It is stitched with human gut to a leather backing of tanned human skin. The Battlemonger was crafted for Yeenoghu, Lord of Gnolls and Ghouls. It adjusts in size to fit creatures up to gnoll stature (7½ feet). It weighs 35 pounds.

**Constant:** The Battlemonger is AC 1. Gnolls, ghouls, and ghosts will not harm the wearer, and such creatures' reactions to the wearer (see the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*) are always friendly. The morale of such creatures while within sight of the Battlemonger is Fearless (20).

At all times, the Battlemonger exudes an overpowering stench in a 10' radius, causing retching and nausea unless a successful saving throw vs. poison is made. (The wearer, gnolls, flinds, and undead are immune.) Those who fail the saving throw attack with a -2 penalty.

If the wearer wields a weapon with which he is not proficient, the armor permits him to fight without penalty. If he is proficient with the weapon, he fights as if specialized. If already a specialist, the wearer fights as if he had achieved mastery. (See the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Combat & Tactics* book.) If already a master, he fights as a high master; if a high master, he fights as a grand master. If already a grand master with the weapon, he gains no additional benefits.

**Invoked:** Three times per day, the wearer of the Battlemonger can *paralyze* by touch (duration 1d6+4 rounds, make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation to avoid). Once per day, the wearer



Be sure you want to keep this suit of plate armor for a long time before you try it on...

BLACK PRISON

can go berserk (as described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*). Once per week, he can summon 2d12 ghouls and 1d4 ghosts, or 3d6 gnolls and 1d4 flinds.

**Curse:** The wearer immediately develops an overpowering appetite for dead human or demihuman flesh. Each day, he must consume the equivalent of one corpse or go insane (as the *symbol* spell, with a cumulative 5% chance per day). If no such flesh is at hand, he goes berserk and must slay a human or demihuman to satisfy his needs.

**Bane:** The Battlemonger armor can be destroyed only if worn for 1 full year by a solar aasimon.

### The Black Prison

The tyrant Graz'zt, Lord of Shadows, commissioned this full suit of ebon plate armor. Draconic in aspect, the suit is crowned with a great helm shaped like a roaring dragon's head. The dragon's open jaws frame a black visor permanently fixed in the closed position. The suit is encribed with sinister, glowing red runes. It weighs 70 pounds.

**Constant:** The Black Prison is AC -2. The wearer does not require food, water,

or air and is immune to poison gas and drowning. The Black Prison bestows 10% magic resistance. The wearer *regenerates* 1 hit point per round and is immune to mind-affecting attacks. If a limb is severed or the wearer is decapitated, she regenerates as a troll.

The suit grants the wearer *dragon sight* (the ability to detect hidden or invisible creatures within 30 feet). The wearer can Hide in Shadows or Move Silently as a thief of equal level.

**Invoked:** Once per day, the wearer can inspire dragon fear equivalent to that produced by an old dragon. (See the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* book.)

**Curse:** Once donned, the Black Prison cannot be removed. The wearer ages normally but otherwise remains trapped within the suit until death. Eventually, this predicament drives her insane (as the *symbol* spell, with a cumulative 5% chance per month). The suit is easily removed upon the wearer's death.

**Bane:** The Black Prison armor can be destroyed only if it is cast into the fires where it was forged, in the Abyssal volcano, located on one of Graz'zt's layers.

If your friends call you bull-headed, give them a butt to the head with this bronze armor.



THE HORNED CASQUE

## The Horned Casque

This suit of bronze platemail was crafted for Baphomet, Lord of Minotaurs. The suit's shoulder plates and bronze helmet are a single piece. The helmet is shaped like a massive bull's head. It has no eye-holes or visor, but magic allows the wearer to see normally through the bull's glowing mauve eyes. The Casque weighs 45 pounds.

The suit is covered in 2-inch spikes. A single row of 4-inch spikes runs down the crest of each shoulder plate. Because of the spikes, any attacker attempting to pummel, grapple, wrestle, or overbear the Casque's wearer suffers 2d4 points of damage per round.

**Constant:** The Casque bestows AC 0. The wearer can never become lost, is immune to *maze* spells, and cannot be surprised. The Casque grants him 60-foot infravision. He can track as a ranger of equal level.

The wearer can lower his head and charge a foe, striking with the Casque's curving bronze horns. To be effective, he must begin the charge at least 30 feet from the intended target. The wearer's attack roll is made at a -3 penalty, and he loses any armor class benefits from high Dexterity. If successful, the charge inflicts 2d6 × 2 points of damage.

**Invoked:** Three times per day, the wearer can cast *charm monster*, effective only on minotaurs. Twice per day, the wearer can bellow, and all within 30 feet must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or flee for 1d6 rounds in fear. Once per day, the wearer can expel gorgon's breath in a cone 5 feet wide at the base and 10 feet wide at the end, with a maximum range of 30 feet. All within the cone who fail a saving throw vs. petrification are turned to stone.

Once per week, the wearer can summon the Brazen Bull. This is a huge

metallic bull similar to a *figurine of wondrous power*. It acts as a mount (AC 3; MV 18; hp 40; THAC0 11; #AT 2 horns; Dmg 1d8/1d8; carrying capacity as per a camel). The Brazen Bull can be dismissed with a mental command. Otherwise it disappears after 24 hours or if reduced to 0 hit points.

**Curse:** Whenever the wearer spots a gnoll or ghou, servants of Baphomet's sworn enemy Yeenoghu, he must make a successful saving throw vs. spell at a -4 penalty or instantly attack, regardless of circumstances. Those who try to restrain the wearer are themselves attacked.

If the wearer harms a minotaur or shows cowardice in battle (by fleeing, for instance), the Casque's spikes instantly reverse inward, skewering the wearer for 1d12+12 points of damage per round until the suit is removed. Once the armor is doffed, the spikes immediately return to their outward configuration.

Baphomet is a chauvinist; the suit's powers function only for males.

**Bane:** The Horned Casque can be destroyed only by the touch of a living unicorn's horn.

## The Immolator

The identity of the tanar'ri lord who ordered this dazzling suit is unknown. The Immolator resembles a samurai's *o-yoroi* (treat as splintmail). The armor is lacquered in scarlet, gold, and orange. The *kabuto* (helmet) bears a golden horned crest. The black lacquered *mempo* (face mask) is that of a man with diabolical features and a long mustache. The suit weighs 40 pounds. When donned, it bursts into flame.

**Constant:** The Immolator grants the wearer AC 1 and immunity to fire- and heat-based attacks. The wearer suffers only half damage from magical cold and no damage from normal cold.

The flames envelop the wearer whenever the complete suit is worn, and they cannot be extinguished. Anyone who touches her suffers 1 point of fire damage per round. The suit provides constant illumination and heat equal to a bonfire. The magical flames easily ignite oil, paper, parchment, dry wood, and the

like. Sturdier items that fail a saving throw vs. magical fire might catch fire, at the DM's discretion.

Between the horns of the kabuto's crest is affixed a small jacinth. This can be plucked out by the wearer and thrown up to 70 feet, acting like a missile from a *necklace of missiles*. The DM should secretly roll 1d10+1 to determine the Hit Dice of the jacinth. A new jacinth (with different Hit Dice) magically appears attached to the kabuto 24 hours later.

**Invoked:** Once per round, the wearer can cause the suit's flames to act as a *fire charm* spell. Three times per day, the wearer can cast *produce fire*. Once per day, she can cast *wall of fire*. Once per week, she can cast *chariot of Sustarre*.

**Curse:** The wearer becomes obsessed with setting fires. Each day, she must cause fiery destruction or go insane (as the *symbol* spell, with a cumulative 2% chance per day). She will do her best not to be caught starting fires, but ultimately the compulsion is impossible to resist, regardless of consequences. Lighting a campfire cannot satisfy the compulsion, but setting fire to a building or forest would. The wearer attacks those who attempt to stop the arson.

**Bane:** The Immolator armor can be destroyed only if quenched in the waters of Arborea's Evergold, the sacred bathing pool of Sune, Hanali Celanil, and several other female powers.

### The Infinite Panoply

The Infinite Panoply was enchanted for Fraz-Urb'luu, Prince of Deception. The Panoply transforms into a different suit of armor at each sunrise, irrespective of the wearer's wishes. It never looks exactly the same twice. It can appear crafted with the finest workmanship from valuable materials, or seem assembled by a half-blind apprentice using whatever came to hand. Sometimes the armor is pristine, other times battle-scarred. It weighs 30 pounds.

**Constant:** The Panoply grants AC 4. The armor wearer is immune to the effects of all illusions and is continuously protected by *nonetection*.

Similar to *armor of blending*, the Infinite Panoply transforms into a normal set of clothes upon mental command. Only



This favored armor of Orcus is an exoskeleton that gets inside you.

### THE JUGGERNAUT

*true seeing* reveals the disguise. The change lasts until the wearer chooses to end it, loses consciousness, falls asleep, or dies.

Attackers who successfully strike the wearer must make a saving throw vs. spell or immediately suffer the same amount of damage as they inflicted. This effect also applies to magical attacks that inflict physical damage, such as *fireballs* or *magic missiles*. This power is not triggered by spells that do not inflict physical damage, such as *enervation*, *phantasmal killer*, or *flesh to stone*.

**Invoked:** Once per round, the wearer can cast *misdirection*. Twice per day, the wearer can cast *polymorph self*, lasting 2 turns per level. Once per day, he can cast an illusion as a *wand of illusion*, lasting 1 round per level.

**Curse:** The Panoply is as unreliable as its patron. At a critical moment, as determined by the DM, the suit will vanish,

teleported to some distant, random destination, perhaps even another plane.

**Bane:** The suit can be destroyed only beneath the tramping feet of the Great Modron March.

### The Juggernaut

This 12'-tall exoskeleton is composed of fused bones from many different creatures, humanoid and monstrous. Crafted for Orcus, Prince of the Undead, it might at first be mistaken for a bone golem or similar construct. Atop the Juggernaut's shoulders rests the magically preserved skull of a nalfeshnee tanar'ri who displeased Orcus. While animated, the skull's eyes crackle with eldritch energies. The Juggernaut weighs 150 pounds.

Upon the utterance of a secret command word, the back ribcage of the suit splits open, allowing the wearer access to a complex leather harness within. The wearer inserts her arms and legs into cavities within the Juggernaut's mighty



extremities. Once strapped inside, the back of the wearer's head is automatically penetrated by a bone probiscus. The probiscus acts as a conduit between the wearer's mental commands and the suit. Each time the suit is used, it requires 1d4+1 rounds of practice for the wearer to synchronize her movements with those of the Juggernaut.

**Constant:** The Juggernaut is AC 2. It grants the wearer 19 Strength and 15 Movement. It inflicts siege damage as a giant fist (as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*). The Juggernaut has 50 hit points, which must be exhausted before the wearer begins to suffer damage. Each sunrise, the Juggernaut is magically restored to maximum hit points and full function.

The Juggernaut suffers only half damage from edged or piercing weapons and only 1 point of damage per die from arrows, quarrels, or missiles. While inside, the wearer is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and similar mind-affecting spells. Cold-based spells are ineffective against the Juggernaut and its occupant. Undead will not harm the Juggernaut or its wearer.

The occupant can command undead as an evil priest of equal level.

**Invoked:** Once per day, the wearer can mentally trigger the Juggernaut's bone-breath, a cone of bone shards 20 feet long, 5 feet wide at the skull's mouth, and 10 feet wide at the base. Anyone

caught within the cone suffers 4d6 points of damage. Victims who make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon suffer only half damage.

**Curse:** Using the Juggernaut is extremely taxing to the wearer. She must make a successful Constitution check at the end of each turn she operates the suit. There is a cumulative -1 penalty per turn beyond the first. If a check is failed, the wearer passes out from exertion for 1-2 turns and can no longer use the suit until she has a full night's sleep.

Each time the Juggernaut's probiscus is inserted into the wearer's skull, energy from the Negative Material plane is transferred from suit to occupant. This causes the occupant to lose 1d4 hit points permanently. A character must make an Intelligence check each time she uses the suit to notice this loss. At 0 hit points, the wearer is transformed into a ju-ju zombie.

**Bane:** The Juggernaut armor can be destroyed by a secret command word known only to Orcus.

### The Lady's Favor

This suit of dirty, stained leather armor is unremarkable in appearance. Complete with rusty buckles and clasps, it was crafted for Zuggtmoy, Lady of Fungi, and weighs 15 pounds.

**Constant:** The Lady's Favor bestows AC 2. The wearer is immune to the effects of all intelligent and dangerous plants, mold, and fungi.

Any metal object that touches the armor automatically corrodes and falls to pieces as if struck by a rust monster's antennae. Magical weapons have a 10% chance per "plus" to be unaffected. Non-weapon, metallic, magical items have a base 20% chance to be unaffected. The wearer's own possessions are immune.

**Invoked:** At will, once per round, the wearer can alter the armor's color, which acts as a *ring of chameleon power*.

Once per round, the wearer can *putrify food and drink* at a touch. Four times per day, he can *speak with plants*. Once per day, his touch can *cause disease*. Once per week, he can *transport via plants*.

**Curse:** Each time the armor is donned, the wearer must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or be infected with a deadly Abyssal mold known as the Lady's Favor. This fuzzy white mold gradually covers the wearer's entire body. The victim loses 1 Charisma point per week. When his Charisma reaches zero, he is completely covered by the mold and dies. He can be cured only by a *wish* spell, and he cannot infect others.

**Bane:** The armor can be destroyed if blessed with holy water from the Beastlands by a 20th-level hierophant druid.

### The Lavashu

A living being rather than an inanimate suit of armor, this symbiote was birthed in some unknown fashion for the Faceless Lord, Juiblex. The Lavashu appears as a ball of viscous black tar about 3 feet in diameter. When touched by a potential host, the ball uncoils itself, enveloping the host from head to toe in a tarry layer, but leaving the hands, eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth uncovered. It weighs 35 pounds.

**Constant:** The Lavashu grants the host AC 4 and immunity to electrical attacks. Due to the Lavashu's slippery nature, attempts to bind the host using such means as rope, chains, *web* spells, or *bind* spells automatically fail. The Lavashu can also alter its composition to cushion falls, enabling the host to suffer only half damage if she fails a saving throw vs. paralyzation and one-quarter damage if the saving throw succeeds.

Attackers who successfully strike the host must make a successful saving

throw vs. spell, or their weapons will stick to the Lavashu. If attackers fail to let go of the stuck weapons, the host makes future attacks against them with a +2 bonus to hit. The host can freely withdraw stuck weapons to wield or discard.

Anyone besides the host who touches the Lavashu suffers 1 point of acid damage per round.

The host can reach through the tarry layer in which she is enveloped to extract or return worn items or equipment. She can freely shed or don new belongings, such as belt pouches, clothes, boots, backpacks, and the like.

**Curse:** The host cannot remove the Lavashu, which permits normal bodily functions to continue. Only upon the host's death will the Lavashu retreat, returning to its ball shape to await the next host.

The Lavashu is chaotic evil with a 10 Intelligence and a 25 Ego, creating a personality score of 35. Although the symbiote has no means of communication with its host, it is aware of its surroundings and attempts to seize permanent control of the host's body via a personality conflict (as described in the Weapons Versus Characters section of the DMG).

Once in control of the host's body, the Lavashu can communicate with others by manipulating the host's vocal chords. The body continues to require sustenance and ages naturally. The Lavashu will use the host body until the body is slain or dies, at which time the symbiote resumes its ball state.

**Bane:** There is no known method to separate a living host from the Lavashu, but the symbiote itself can be destroyed by burying it at the exact centre of the Para-elemental Plane of Salt.

### The Pelagic Aegis

This "suit" consists of a matched set of golden greaves and vambraces whose exterior surfaces are covered by embossed depictions of fearsome submarine creatures, including intertwined octopi, manta rays, and morkoth. The metal plates are backed by sharkskin. Dagon, Prince of the Watery Depths,



commissioned the Aegis. The full set weighs 14 pounds.

**Constant:** The Aegis grants the wearer AC 2 and immunity to all forms of water-based attack.

When donned, the wearer is enclosed in an invisible magical aura that permits the wearer to breathe underwater. It also functions as a *ring of free action*. The aura nullifies the crushing pressure of the deep ocean and keeps the wearer at a comfortable temperature. The wearer's vision is unimpaired by water distortion, although a light source is still required at depths below where sunlight reaches.

The Aegis permits water-breathing creatures to function without penalty on land for an indefinite period. It also allows salt-water beings to survive in fresh water, and vice versa.

Full immersion in salt or fresh water allows the wearer to regenerate 1 hit point per round.

**Invoked (Minor):** At the wearer's mental command, the Aegis functions as a *ring of water walking*. Once per round, it acts as a *trident of fish command*.

**Invoked (Major):** Three times per day, the wearer can cast *obscurement* (which functions normally above or

below water). Twice per day, he can cast *lower water*, or its reverse, *raise water*. Once per day, he can cast one of the following spells: *Evard's black tentacles*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*, or *Dagon's curse*. The latter ability allows the caster at a touch to fill the victim's lungs with sea water. If the victim fails a saving throw vs. spell, he drowns.

**Curse:** An air-breather who dons the Aegis must make a successful saving throw vs. petrification at a -3 penalty each time a major power is invoked or instantly be unable to breathe oxygen. Only a *wish* will cure the victim. Water-breathers who fail the saving throw are instantly transported (without the Aegis) to Dagon's watery court in the Abyss.

**Bane:** The Aegis can be destroyed only if devoured by Dagon's longstanding rival, the sahuagin power Sekolah.

### The Raptor Cuirass

This ornate back-and-breast armor was forged from an unknown crimson ore for Pazuzu, Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms. Attached to the backplate are a set of metallic wings shaped like overlapping feathers. The wings are normally folded against the wearer's back, but



This armor is not for those afraid of spiders.

THE SPIDERSPAWN

upon mental command they extend outward to a 14' span. The suit includes a set of metal talons that fit over the wearer's hands like bagh nahk (tiger claws). The Raptor Cuirass weighs 65 pounds.

**Constant:** The suit is AC 3. When the wings are extended, the wearer can fly for up to 10 turns (Movement 15, Maneuverability Class B, supports up to 500 pounds).

Forgoing any other attacks, the wearer can strike with both talons in a round. Each talon inflicts 1d4+1 points of slashing damage and permanently drips a Type P poison with an onset time of 1-3 rounds. The victim must make a saving throw vs. poison at a -4 penalty to avoid its effects.

**Invoked:** Once per round, the wearer can *speak with animals*, effective on avians only. Three times per day, she can cast *gust of wind*. Once per week, she can perform each of the following: create a

whirlwind (as per a djinn, but it cannot be ridden; duration 1 round per level), utter a war cry (acts as a *horn of blasting*), or summon 1d4 vrocks to aid her. The latter is considered an evil act.

**Curse:** Each week the Raptor Cuirass is worn, the user must make a successful saving throw vs. polymorph or gradually suffer the hollowing out of her bones. There is a cumulative -1 penalty per week beyond the first. The victim permanently loses 1 Strength point for each failed saving throw. At zero Strength, she collapses into a jellylike mass and dies.

**Bane:** The Raptor Cuirass can be destroyed only if it is bathed in the holy essence of 100 movanic devas.

### The Rime Guard

This suit of platemail appears composed of mail and plate armor chiselled from crystalline ice. The padding worn under-

neath is made from polar bear fur. A genuine polar bear headdress is affixed to the top of an open-faced helmet also seemingly carved from ice. The Rime Guard was commissioned by Kostchtchie to bestow on his barbarian mortal champion. It weighs 50 pounds.

**Constant:** The suit is AC -1. The wearer is immune to cold and suffers half damage from fire-based magical attacks. Normal fire inflicts no damage. The wearer can cross snow or ice at his normal movement rate.

Anyone except the wearer who touches the Rime Guard suffers 1 point of cold damage per round. The Rime Guard exudes a bone-chilling aura, lowering the temperature in a 10' radius to zero degrees (as the priest spell *control temperature*, 10' radius).

**Invoked:** Once per round, the wearer can cast *chill metal* (the reverse of *heat metal*) at a touch. Once per day, he can cast each of the following: *wall of ice*, *Otiluke's freezing sphere*, *frostfreeze*. The latter functions like the reversed form of *stone to flesh*, except the victim is transformed into solid ice, not stone.

**Curse:** The first time the wearer dons the Rime Guard, he suffers 4d4 points of cold damage. A successful saving throw vs. spell halves the damage.

At the end of each week the Rime Guard is worn, the user must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or be afflicted with lycanthropy. (See the *curse of lycanthropy* spell in the MM.) There is a -1 cumulative saving throw penalty per week beyond the first. The victim's polar bear form is chaotic evil. A cured victim can be reinfected if he dons the suit again.

**Bane:** The Rime Guard can be destroyed only if smothered on the Elemental Plane of Fire by the humblest fire elemental tyrant.

### The Spiderspawn

Lolth the Spider Queen ordered this adamantine suit of satiny black chain mail constructed for her finest drow priestess. A stomacher woven from spidersilk and studded with small rubies is worn over the mail. The rubies are arranged to mimic spider's eyes. The Spiderspawn weighs 40 pounds.

**Constant:** The suit bestows AC 0. Unlike other drow mail, it is not destroyed by sunlight. The wearer is immune to poison and strikes first in melee combat regardless of the initiative roll. The wearer can *spider climb* or *jump* once per round at will.

**Invoked:** Six times per day, the wearer can cast *web*. Once per day, she can transform into a myrlochar. (See FOR2 *The Drow of the Underdark* accessory.) She keeps her own hit points and THAC0, but otherwise gains all the powers of the creature. Each time she transforms into the myrlochar or back into drow form, she is healed of all lost hit points. The transformation lasts until she wills it to end or 66 rounds have passed.

**Curse:** In contrast to the other Abyssal lords and their commissions, Lolth keeps a close watch on the Spiderspawn and its whereabouts. If the suit falls into non-drow hands, the wearer suffers continuous assaults from all manner of arachnids and drow war parties until the Spiderspawn is recovered.

Drow who don the suit and displease Lolth risk (30% chance each time) being transformed overnight into a drider (see the MM) and cast out of drow society.

The suit's powers function only if worn by a female.

**Bane:** The Spiderspawn can be destroyed if struck by an arrow from the elven power Corellon Larethian's bow.

### The Wizard Ward

This fabled hauberk of glittering scale-mail was forged at Demogorgon's behest. The emerald scales are small and closefit, resembling snakeskin. It is the only known suit of armor that wizards can wear. Indeed, its powers function only for wizards. It weighs 25 pounds.

**Constant:** The Wizard Ward is AC 3 and bestows 20% magic resistance. No serpents or reptiles of any kind (including yuan-ti, naga, and dragons) will attack the wearer.

**Invoked:** Once per round, the wearer can cast *charm monster* on serpents, reptiles, or serpentlike creatures. Once per day, the wearer can cause the scales to flash as a *robe of scintillating colors*.


Three times per day, the wearer can summon a *spellwhip*, which materializes

on the back of the hauberk. This translucent forked tail strikes at the wearer's mental command once per round, in addition to any other attacks he might have. The wearer cannot cast spells in the same round he uses the *spellwhip*.

With a successful attack roll, the *spellwhip* inflicts 1d6+6 points of damage and, if the victim is a spellcaster, drains one randomly determined spell from his mind. A successful saving throw vs. spell negates the spell drain but not the damage. The tail extends or contracts to strike any foe within a 30' range targeted by the wearer. The *spellwhip* itself is AC 0 and dissolves upon a successful strike, after sustaining 15 points of damage, or after 5 rounds have passed, whichever occurs first.

**Curse:** Each time one of the Wizard Ward's invoked powers is used, the wearer must make a successful saving

throw vs. polymorph at a -2 penalty. Each failure causes the wearer to gradually transform into a giant serpent. First his hair falls out; upon subsequent failed saves, his skin turns scaly, his eyes alter, and his tongue forks. Later, his legs grow together into a tail, his arms atrophy, and his neck lengthens until finally he becomes a giant snake. His Intelligence drops 1 point per failed saving throw until it reaches Animal level (1). Only a *wish* will restore his original form.

**Bane:** The Wizard Ward can be destroyed only by the breath of Bahamut the Platinum Dragon. 

*Paul Fraser dedicates this article to the Red Riders, who first discovered the folly of running afoul of a tanar'ri lord. He lives in Edmonton, Alberta.*

## Adventure Hooks

❖ Unknown to a PC, his armor contains a lost piece from one of the suits of Abyssal armor. A power-hungry mage has assembled the rest of the suit and is desperate seeking the missing piece, placing the PCs in constant danger of attack or theft.

❖ The PCs are approached by a gold dragon in human form seeking to hire them to recover and destroy one of the suits. Its current possessor, a death knight, must be found and defeated. The dragon might or might not know the proper method of destruction for the suit in question. Even if she does, finishing the job is complicated by other foes seeking to win the suit for themselves.

❖ Through an intermediary, a notorious high-level chaotic evil fighter hires the PCs to recover a suit. If the party succeeds, the fighter will use the suit to set herself up as a tyrant. If the PCs discover they have been duped before surrendering the suit, the evil fighter attempts to slay them. If they don't learn the facts until too late, they must defeat a foe protected by the suit.

❖ One of the party's longstanding foes gains possession of a suit of Abyssal armor. Perhaps formerly on the verge of defeat, the suit reinvigorates the foe and offers new chances to bedevil the PCs.

❖ The PCs encounter a barbarian horde led by a chieftain wearing the Rime Guard and backed by fanatical shamans and berserker shock troops.

❖ Druids ask the PCs to protect a rare albino unicorn from a series of abduction attempts. The tanar'ri lord Yeenoghu wishes to thwart his enemy Baphomet by destroying the Horned Casque, currently in the possession of a group sworn to the Gnoll Lord's service.

❖ Exploring a dungeon complex, the PCs stumble into an oubliette beneath a pit trap containing the skeleton of an old man. The man is clad from head to foot in ebony plate armor—the Black Prison. If the man's spirit is contacted via *speak with dead*, he swears truthfully that donning the suit makes its wearer nigh invincible. However, he does not reveal the suit's curse. An experienced warrior in life, he stumbled into the pit trap while scouting ahead alone. His companions did not find him, and he could not free himself. He went insane before dying of old age two decades later.

❖ A PC accidentally becomes a host to the Lavashu. Her companions must learn how to do what no one else has ever done: separate the symbiote from its living host. Only Juiblex knows whether it is possible. Of course, if the Lavashu takes control of the PC's body, it strenuously resists such efforts.

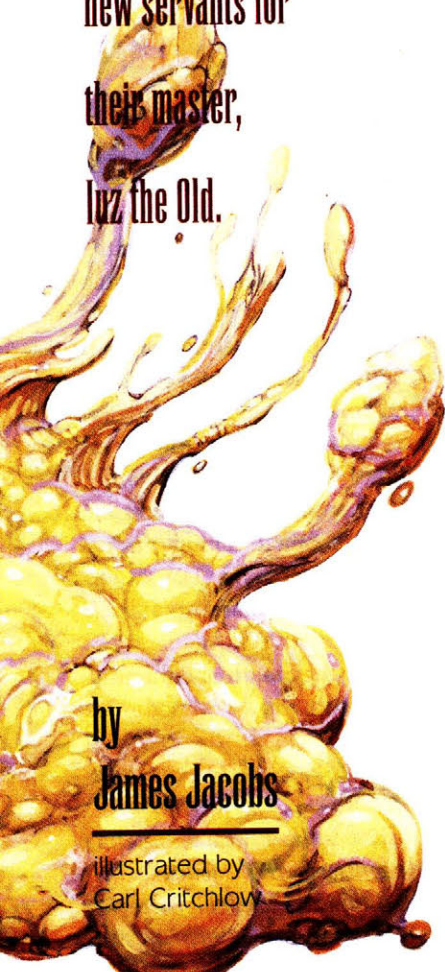


# Minions of Iuz

The demon army is  
banished, so the  
Bonehart have  
conjured dreadful  
new servants for  
their master,  
Iuz the Old.

by  
**James Jacobs**

illustrated by  
Carl Critchlow



**L**THE MONTH OF COLDEVEN IN COMMON YEAR 586 WAS terrible for the Empire of Iuz. The recovery of the Crook of Rao granted the forces of good the power to banish the demons the demigod had amassed. The loss of these powerful allies threw Iuz's forces into chaos, and they were unable to defend themselves from renewed attacks on their borders. Before long, much of the land that Iuz had conquered was torn from his grasp.

Iuz's elite spellcasters, the Bonehart, were baffled by the loss of their demonic allies. Many of them suffered terrible fates at the hands of their lord when they failed to provide acceptable reasons for the Flight of the Fiends. Bonehart members scrambled to devise a way to return the fiends to Oerth, but they failed. Eventually, Iuz accepted the fact that the demons were gone, for now.

Until the fiends could be returned to Oerth, Iuz needed replacements to fill his empty ranks. The task of repopulating these decimated armies fell to the Bonehart. They struggled to subjugate many of Oerth's naturally appearing monsters for a while, but this effort proved too slow and complex to quickly replenish Iuz's forces. Thus, they fell upon the concept of creating new monsters for their lord, creatures every bit as fierce as the demons that once served Iuz.

At first, their efforts met with failure, but the Bonehart persevered. Their first success was accidental. The introduction of the spores of an Abyssal fungus onto Oerth prompted the creation of a deadly

creature that came to be known as a dirtwraith. The Bonehart lost no time in introducing this creature to bolster their defenses in the Vesve Forest. Not long after, Bonehart explorers in the distant Wormcrawl Fissure discovered a terrible beast from the days of Kyuss's reign: the Hounds of Kyuss. These undead monsters proved easy to control. Since they spread like disease, they made natural additions to Iuz's army.

The first successful Bonehart creation was the blackroot marauder, a golem-like thing that proved utterly loyal to the Bonehart's commands. Encouraged by this success, the Bonehart embarked on one of their most ambitious projects: an entirely new form of life. Unfortunately, their greatest creation also proved to be their worst mistake.

*James Jacobs grew up in Northern California, then moved to Seattle after graduating from college. Since then, he's managed to worm his way into Wizards of the Coast, where he now works in the Sales department.*

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any          |
| FREQUENCY:       | Very rare    |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Solitary     |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | Any          |
| DIET:            | None         |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | Semi (2-4)   |
| TREASURE:        | Nil          |
| ALIGNMENT:       | Neutral evil |

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1                               |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 2                               |
| MOVEMENT:         | 15                              |
| HIT DICE:         | 9 (40 hit points)               |
| THACO:            | 11                              |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 2                               |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 3d4/3d4                         |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Poison thorns, surprise         |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Immunities, cannot be surprised |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                             |
| SIZE:             | M (7' tall)                     |
| MORALE:           | Fearless (20)                   |
| XP VALUE:         | 6,000                           |



Blackroot marauders are magical constructs created by priests of Iuz. Similar to golems, they resemble animated saplings covered with black leaves and thorns. The arrangement of their roots and branches gives them a rudimentary humanoid form. The faint outlines of a leering, evil face in the bark of the marauder is enough to unnerve even the hardest woodsman.

**Combat:** In combat, blackroot marauders strike twice per round with their thorny branches, causing 3d4 points of damage on a hit. In addition, they can fire 1d6 of their thorns per round at any one target within 30 feet. Anyone struck by one of these thorns must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or lose 1d4 hit points per round for 2d4 rounds. This damage is not cumulative with multiple thorn strikes, but the duration of the poisoning is. Thus, a victim struck by a total of four thorns who fails the saving throw all four times suffers 1d4 points of poison damage for 8d4 rounds. A *neutralize poison* spell stops further damage but won't cure damage already suffered. A *slow poison* spell reduces the damage to only 1 point per round. Launched thorns re-grow at an amazing rate; a marauder effectively has an infinite number of thorns at its disposal. The marauder cannot poison victims with its melee attacks.

Blackroot marauders are immune to all forms of electricity, mind-affecting magic, and poison. They suffer no damage from blunt weapons, only 1 point of damage per strike from piercing weapons, and half damage from slashing weapons. While not moving or attacking, a blackroot marauder is indistinguishable from the surrounding vegetation, granting it a +3 bonus to surprise against all non-druid opponents.

At will, blackroot marauders can cast *know alignment* on all creatures within 60 yards. Marauders can even sense the alignments of creatures in hiding or invisible, so they are thus impossible to surprise.

**Habitat/Society:** Although they possess a rudimentary cunning, blackroot marauders are artificial beings and do not form societies. Since the Flight of the Fiends, Iuz has begun to rely more and more on these creations in the Vesve Forest. Their ability to blend in with the environment makes them the ideal ambush force. Many blackroot marauders are commanded to roam the forest and attack any non-evil creature they encounter. The presence of these creatures has increased since the Flight of the Fiends, making them some of the most notorious adversaries to the rangers of the Vesve Forest.

**Ecology:** The process of creating a blackroot marauder is quite involved. The Bonehart closely guards the secrets of marauder creation, but rumors of the process have been popping up here and there nevertheless.

Only priests of Iuz of at least 12th level or higher can successfully animate a blackroot marauder. The first step in creating one is the preparation of the body. The priest must locate a young sapling of the right height (about 7 feet); this sapling must be growing wild. Once located, the priest must clear the surrounding area in a 15' radius of all vegetation. The sapling must then be kept from the direct light of the sun for a month. Each sunrise and sunset during this cycle, the priest must rub unholy water into the bark of the tree and provide nourishment by pouring warm blood over its roots. On the final day of the month, the priest must cast the following spells on the sapling in the following order: *warp wood*, *spike growth*, *know alignment*, *poison*, *quest*, and *animate object*. With the completion of the animate object spell, the blackroot marauder comes to life, ready to obey its master's wishes. Note that some of these spells (notably *warp wood* and *spike growth*) must be cast from scrolls, since Iuz does not normally grant these spells to his clerics and priests.

# Dirtwraith (Sargusian Fungus)

|                  |                              |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Vesve Forest, the Abyss      |
| FREQUENCY:       | Rare (uncommon in the Abyss) |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Solitary                     |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | Nocturnal                    |
| DIET:            | Carnivore                    |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | Semi- (2-4)                  |
| TREASURE:        | Z                            |
| ALIGNMENT:       | Chaotic evil                 |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1                                       |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 9                                       |
| MOVEMENT:         | 1                                       |
| HIT DICE:         | 1 to 12                                 |
| THACO:            | Variable                                |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1                                       |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d4 to 12d4                             |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Animate plants, spores                  |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Various immunities                      |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                                     |
| SIZE:             | See below                               |
| MORALE:           | Fearless (20)                           |
| XP VALUE:         | 1 HD: 420                               |
|                   | 2 HD: 650                               |
|                   | 3 HD: 975                               |
|                   | 4 HD: 1,400                             |
|                   | 5 HD: 2,000                             |
|                   | 6+ HD: 3,000 + 1,000 per Hit Die over 6 |

The dirtwraith's name comes from the commonly held (but incorrect) belief that the fungus is a form of undead that spontaneously erupts out of the corrupt dirt beneath a decaying body. Rather, it is a form of semi-intelligent fungus that dwells in the root systems of larger plants. The fact that skeletons are commonly found nearby attests to its efficiency, not to its genesis. A dirtwraith appears as a mass of pale yellow spheroids connected by a matrix of thick, fibrous strands. Dirtwraiths are natives of the Abyss and are known as Sargusian fungi to the inhabitants there.

**Combat:** Dirtwraiths live among the root system of their plant host. As they grow, their fibrous tendrils allow them a clumsy form of undulating locomotion that lets them move about when necessary. They sense prey through ground vibrations.

A dirtwraith attacks once per round with its host plant, causing damage equal to 1d4 for each of its Hit Dice on a successful hit. Thus, a 5-HD dirtwraith causes 5d4 points of damage.

The host remains a nonsentient creature and is immune to mind-affecting magic and the like. It can withstand damage equal to the dirtwraith's hit point total before being destroyed; most plants have an AC of 6. Slaying the plant does not slay the dirtwraith; the creature simply moves to a new host once it thinks it's alone. To slay a dirtwraith, the pod network must be exhumed or else the attacker must wait motionlessly for the dirtwraith to extract itself to search for a new host (usually within 2d6 turns).



The dirtwraith is immune to fire, mind-affecting magic, and blunt weapons. Once exhumed, its only defense is to spray spores. Each pod can spray one cloud of spores per day; a successful hit forces the target to make a saving throw vs. poison to avoid choking. Failure indicates that the victim suffers 1d6 points of damage per round for 2d4 rounds. A successful saving throw indicates a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

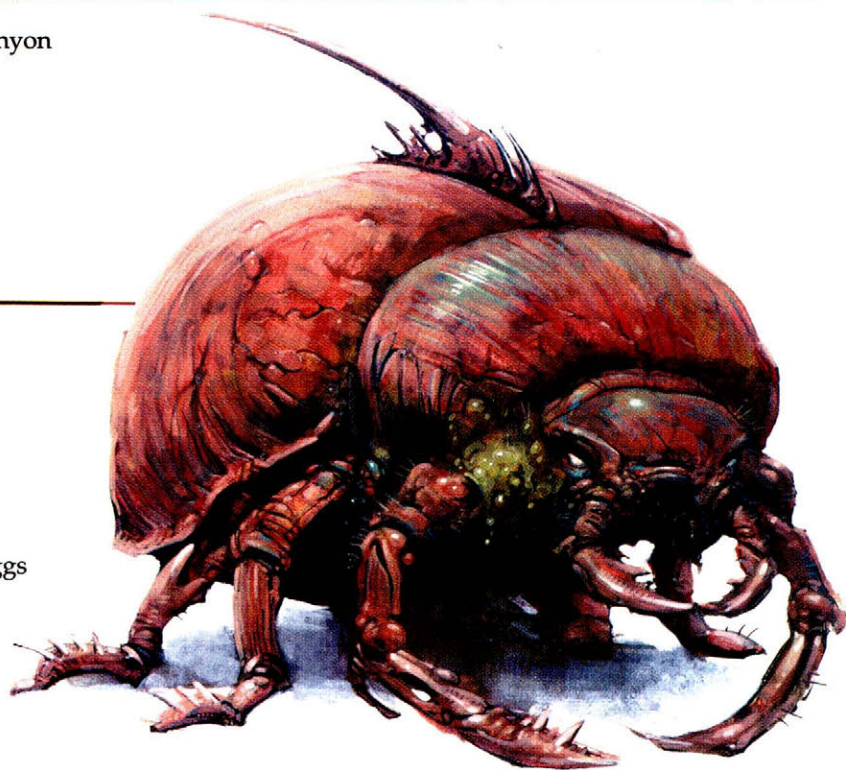
**Habitat/Society:** The Bonehart discovered the dirtwraith when one of their number accidentally brought Sargusian spores back from a trip to the Abyss. The unwitting wizard scattered spores throughout the town of Delaquenn. Before long, the spores took root and grew into dirtwraiths. The Bonehart took great interest in the fungus when it became apparent that it was not only an efficient killer but also an intelligent one.

**Ecology:** A dirtwraith's Hit Dice are directly related to its age. When a dirtwraith first "takes root," it consists of only a single pod. At this stage, it has only one Hit Die and can animate only small shrubs and creeping vines. As it feeds, new pods appear and grow to maturity at the rate of one pod per month (assuming a regular supply of food). With each pod, the dirtwraith gains an additional Hit Die and can animate increasingly large plants. Dirtwraiths cease to grow once they reach 12 Hit Dice.

Demons of all types relish dirtwraith pods as a delicacy. Unfortunately, these pods are poisonous to anything native to the Prime Material Plane. Eating even a few bites of a dirtwraith pod forces the victim to make a successful saving throw vs. poison or fall into a fevered coma for 2d6 days. Once this time has passed, the victim can make a second saving throw vs. poison to overcome the fever. If this second saving throw fails, the victim dies, and the body provides the base nutrients for a new dirtwraith pod.

|                  |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Empire of Iuz, Rift Canyon |
| FREQUENCY:       | Rare                       |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Swarm                      |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | Any                        |
| DIET:            | Living beings              |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | Non- (0)                   |
| TREASURE:        | Nil                        |
| ALIGNMENT:       | Chaotic evil               |

|                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| NO. APPEARING:    | 2d6                     |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 8                       |
| MOVEMENT:         | 12, jump 9              |
| HIT DICE:         | 2+2                     |
| THACO:            | 19                      |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1                       |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 2d4                     |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Confusion, vermin, eggs |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Regeneration            |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                     |
| SIZE:             | M (4' long)             |
| MORALE:           | Fearless (20)           |
| XP VALUE:         | 650                     |



The Hounds of Kyuss were created ages ago by the high priest Kyuss for use as guardians and pets. A Hound of Kyuss appears as a huge, undead scarab beetle the size of a large mastiff. These creatures constantly emit an unnerving sound not unlike the sound of fingernails scraping slate. Hounds of Kyuss possess a powerful pair of mandibles they use to grasp their prey, and they have retractable stingers on their backs located at the junction of the thorax and abdomen. Their exoskeletons are often cracked and badly damaged (hence their poor Armor Class), and swarms of vermin and parasitic beings scuttle across their decaying bodies.

**Combat:** The chittering of a Hound of Kyuss is maddening. Anyone within 30 feet of one of these horrors must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation at the start of the round or be *confused* (as the 4th-level wizard spell *confusion*) for that round. This saving throw must be made each round that the victim remains in the area of effect. Hounds of Kyuss can be turned as if they were wights.

Hounds of Kyuss regenerate at the rate of 2 hit points per round; this even allows the re-growth of severed limbs. Hounds reduced to 0 hit points collapse to the ground but continue to regenerate; once their hit points become positive again, the Hounds spring back to life. Damage caused by fire, acid, lightning, and holy water cannot be regenerated. Pouring holy water on a Hound's wounds or touching a good holy symbol to the Hound's body once it is below 0 hit points causes it to stop regenerating and die.

A Hound of Kyuss attacks once per round with its powerful bite. Anyone bitten by a Hound of Kyuss is also attacked by the Hound's stinger; if the stinger hits, it causes no damage, but it does implant a tiny red egg in the victim. The victim must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or else the egg

quickly hatches the next round into a tiny Hound. This Hound begins burrowing through the victim's body, inflicting 1 point of damage per turn. During this time, the victim suffers a -2 penalty to saving throws and AC, and spells cast by the victim suffer a flat 25% chance of failure. If not treated, this infestation eventually slays the victim. A *cure disease* or *heal* spell cures the infestation. Within 1d6 hours after the victim's death, a fully grown Hound of Kyuss erupts from the victim's body.

Hounds of Kyuss are seething with diseased vermin. Anyone struck by a Hound or making a successful melee attack on it must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or become infested with vermin. Infested characters cannot heal wounds except through magic, and they lose 1 point of Constitution per day. Once a victim's Constitution reaches 0, he or she dies. The vermin can be slain by applying any of the following spells; *cloud of purification*, *cure disease*, *remove curse*, *heal*, or *dispel evil*. *Anti-vermin barrier* stills the vermin so that they cannot infest others, but those already infested remain so.

**Habitat/Society:** Hounds of Kyuss roam in search of food. They are found most often in the Wormcrawl Fissure near the Rift Canyon. The Bonehart has captured many of the creatures and have started "breeding" programs in Dorakaa. Hounds are often released into enemy cities and allowed to wreak havoc. Although unintelligent, they can be controlled by evil priests who can command undead. Many of Iuz's faithful use them as temple guardians or instruments of torture.

**Ecology:** Hound of Kyuss eggs die within a matter of minutes if not encased in living flesh. The vermin that coat the Hounds are more hardy and can live for nearly an hour after separation from their host, at which time they die and melt into brackish water. Once the host is slain, the vermin die as well.

# Murdakus

|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Empire of Iuz |
| FREQUENCY:       | Very rare     |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Solitary      |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | See below     |
| DIET:            | Carnivore     |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | Semi (2-4)    |
| TREASURE:        | Nil           |
| ALIGNMENT:       | Neutral evil  |

|                   |                                       |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1                                     |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | -4                                    |
| MOVEMENT:         | 15, fly 18 (D), sprint 30             |
| HIT DICE:         | 18                                    |
| THACO:            | 7                                     |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 5                                     |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 2-12/2-12/3-30/3-30/2-24              |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Death frenzy, severing, breath weapon |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Immunities, regeneration, absorb heat |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                                   |
| SIZE:             | G (50' long, 45' tail)                |
| MORALE:           | Fanatic (17-18)                       |
| XP VALUE:         | 25,000                                |

These behemoths are more than 90 feet long when fully grown and vaguely resemble dragons. They have six powerful legs, a pair of batlike wings, and a long prehensile tail tipped with a scythelike stinger. A triple row of spines extend from the base of their thick necks to the stinger. Murdakus have two separate sets of saurian jaws filled with razor-sharp teeth as well as two eyes on each side of their horned heads.

**Combat:** A murdakus attacks five times per round and can split these attacks among separate attackers. Two of the creature's attacks are bites from its twin jaws for 3d10 points of damage each. It can also rear up on its hind four feet, allowing attacks with its claws for 2d6 points of damage each. Finally, the murdakus can strike at anything within 45 feet with its tail blade, inflicting 2d12 points of damage on a hit and severing a random limb from the target if it scores a natural 20.

Against creatures beyond melee range, a murdakus has only one attack: its breath weapon, usable once per turn. This consists of a pair of narrow beams of intense heat that lance forth from each of its jaws. The murdakus must aim these twin beams in different directions in up to a 90 degree arc; creatures of size L or smaller can be hit by only one beam. Each beam causes 12d6+24 points of damage to all creatures in its path (120 feet long and 5 feet wide). The murdakus loathes to use this attack, however, since it loses the ability to regenerate for the next turn as its body heat replenishes. If reduced to less than 1 hit point, a murdakus goes into a frenzy, gaining double its normal amount of attacks for 1 round. At the end of this round, it loses a further 3d8 hit points and drops to the ground.

The murdakus regenerates damage at the rate of 1d4 hit points per round as it draws heat from the surrounding envi-

ronment to magically repair its wounds. Whorls of fire and shimmering radiance play over the body of a regenerating murdakus; anyone touching a regenerating murdakus must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or suffer 1d4 points of heat-based damage. A murdakus cannot regenerate damage caused by acid or negative energy. A sure way to slay a murdakus permanently is to reduce it to negative hit points within a turn of its use of its breath weapon.

The murdakus is immune to mind-affecting attacks and suffer half damage from poisons that do not slay outright. Fire attacks heal damage on a point-for-point basis. Although resistant to natural cold, it suffers normal damage from magical cold.

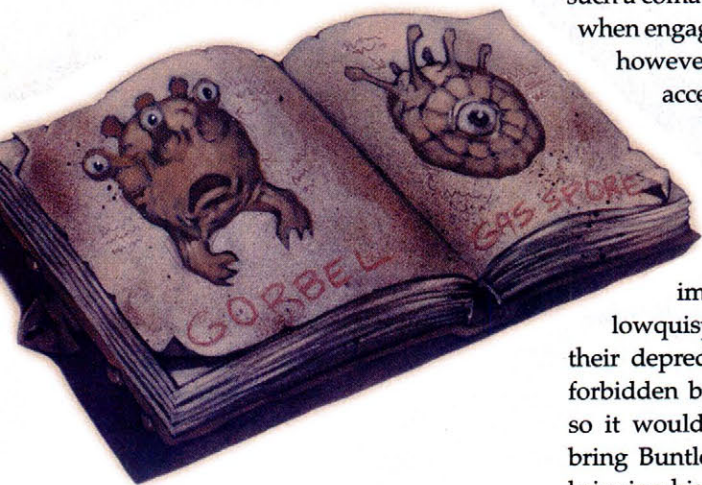
**Habitat/Society:** Murdakus are ravenous; just one of them can depopulate all life within 2 square miles in less than a day. Luckily, they have terribly inefficient metabolisms. After 1d3 days of activity, a murdakus must rest for 2d4 weeks. Until it rests, it suffers a +4 penalty to its AC, a -4 penalty to its THACO, and a 50% reduction to its movement. A very hot fire (like dragon breath or a fireball) revitalizes a murdakus for 1d3 days.

**Ecology:** During the dark times of the Greyhawk wars, the Bonehart decided to create a chimerical monstrosity to devastate their enemies. Their first attempt spawned a lesser form of murdakus that functioned for a short period of time before collapsing into a fatal coma. Seeking to improve their creation, the Bonehart infused the beast with the ability to metabolize heat. Unfortunately, the murdakus quickly built up an immunity to magical control and rebelled against their allies, causing great damage to Iuz's forces before retreating into the northern wilderness. Iuz was angered at the turn of events, and ordered the deaths of all those who knew the secrets of murdakus creation and destroyed all of their notes. Since then, no new murdakus have been created, and none have been known to breed.





When mutant killer  
beholders ravage the  
countryside, it's the  
Monster Hunters to  
the rescue!



by  
**Johnathan M. Richards**

illustrated by  
Jeff Miracola

## The Ecology of the Gorbelt Full of Hot Air

With much more force than was necessary, Dreelix slammed his gavel three times onto the table in front of him, leaving three curved indentations in the hard wood. "I hereby call this meeting of the Monster Hunters Association to order," he barked, bringing the whispered conversations among the sages and wizards making up his audience to an immediate halt.

The pre-meeting conversations were much more animated today than normal, for everyone was eager to see what Dreelix's reaction to his recent travails would be: He had spent the better part of the past week in a pseudodragon-induced coma, along with his cohorts in crime, Zantoulios and Grindle. True, such a coma was an occupational hazard when engaged in a pseudodragon hunt;

however, Dreelix was less likely to accept Buntleby's having placed them on display in embarrassing positions during their immobility. Still, the three renegade wizards had magically impersonated Buntleby, Willowquisp, and Spontayne during their depredations, an action explicitly forbidden by the Association's bylaws, so it would be difficult for Dreelix to bring Buntleby up on charges without bringing his own improprieties out into the open as well.

Buntleby stared directly into Dreelix's eyes, silently daring him to take action. Willowquisp and Spontayne sat at either side of the young wizard, adding their looks of determination to Buntleby's own. Dreelix fumed in silence, then took a deep breath and began the meeting minutes.

"Tonight we'll go over Zantoulios' formula for potions of healing and attempt to reduce the troll-skin side effects plaguing his most recent batches; Old Gumphrey, your expertise is especially relevant in this endeavor, so try to stay awake! Grindle will read a list of those members delinquent in their monthly dues payments and will assign a suitable fee for tardiness. Then, the rest of the meeting will be spent on our initial planning for the Mage Fair later this year." He looked around the room. "Anything else? No? Then Grindle, approach with your list!"

As the corpulent wizard ambled up to the front podium with a crumpled sheet of parchment in one pudgy hand, Buntleby turned to his companions and whispered, "See? Told you he'd cave!"

Grindle had no sooner reached the podium when there was a commotion at the front entrance of the meeting hall. The door burst open, and in walked a mustachioed warrior in a suit of fine mail links, a thick sword at his belt.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded Dreelix. "You can't just burst in here—"

"You the Monster Hunters?" interrupted the warrior.

"Indeed we are, and we're not accused—"

"Let's go, then," said the warrior. "I've been sent to fetch you; there's trouble in the Duke's fields."

"Trouble? What kind of trouble?" demanded Dreelix.

"Monster trouble," said the warrior, as if that should have been obvious. "Let's go, people, shake a leg! I've got a wagon waiting outside." Despite Dreelix's blusters, the Monster Hunters were unceremoniously herded out the door of their meeting hall and into the back of a wagon pulled by two tired-looking nags. By reason of his importance, Dreelix sat up front with the warrior.

"Perhaps now would be a good time to discuss our fees," suggested Dreelix.

"No need. As Undermarshall, I'm authorized to deputize the lot of you; you are now working for the city and must take any appeals for monetary compensation to the Duke himself, an undertaking for which I wish you good luck." He encouraged the nags to greater speed, as if eager to discharge his passengers at the earliest convenience.

"Hrrmph!" scoffed Dreelix, folding his arms in disgust. "Again we are forced to work for free!"

"If I might ask, what type of monster is it we're being sent after?" asked Buntleby from the back of the wagon.

"Beholders,"<sup>1</sup> replied the Undermarshall. "About a dozen or so, chomping away in the Duke's cornstalks, and he's none too happy about it. My men refuse to go up against beholders without magical assistance. Hence, your immediate deputization."

"Yes, completely understandable," agreed Dreelix, his spirits brightening at once. "Why should your simple soldiers, armed solely with the knowledge of how to wave a spear around, be expected to confront such a menace? Have your men stand aside while the bold and brave Monster Hunters show them the true power of the wizardly arts!"

"This, essentially, was my plan," said

the Undermarshall as the wagon pulled up to the edge of the Duke's fields. The Monster Hunters piled out of the wagon in a disorganized gaggle.

A trio of guardsmen approached the Undermarshall and saluted.

"They haven't moved much,"

reported the highest-ranking of the three. "Don't seem to have spotted us yet, either."<sup>2</sup>

We've got guardsmen posted around the fields, but we've held off the attack until your arrival."

"Good, good, excellent," replied Dreelix, as if the comments had been addressed to him. "Now, just keep your men out of our way, and we'll have this little beholder problem taken care of in no time." He motioned for the other Monster Hunters to gather around him. "Okay," he whispered, "What do we know about beholders?"

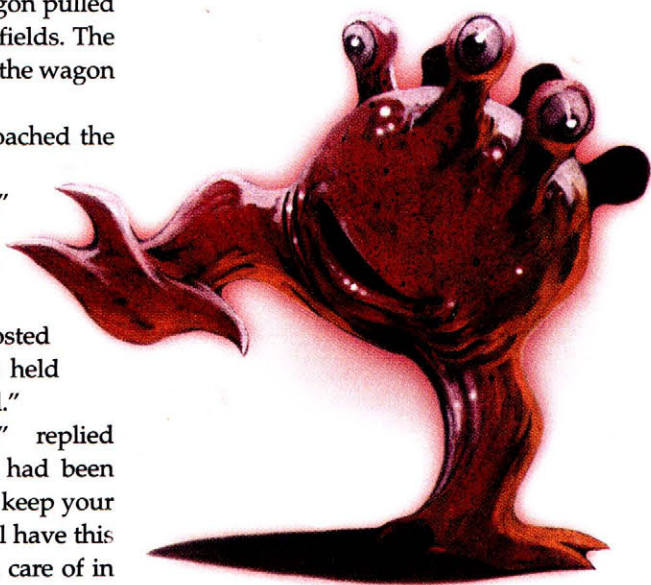
"Well, for one thing," remarked Zantoulios, "if there's really a dozen of them out there in the cornfield, we're gonna get our butts kicked but good! I don't think the lot of us could take on a single beholder right now, without having made the appropriate preparations. I, for one, have only a small handful of combat spells memorized at present."

"My inventory is similarly spare," lamented Spontayne.

"Let's not hear such pessimistic thoughts!" replied Dreelix. "We're in the spotlight here; a successful routing can enhance our reputation to no small effect!"

"Unless we're the ones getting routed," mumbled the gangly wizard.

"We'll probably fare better than you might expect," remarked Willowquisp. "For one thing, I don't think we're up against beholders at all. To the best of my knowledge, they seldom travel in such numbers out in the open. Even if such were the case, I doubt they'd have entered our fair city merely to munch on some corn."



"So what else could they be?" asked Buntleby. "Gas spores?"

"Doubtful. Gas spores don't eat corn, either."

"Then what?"

"A good question. Lady Ablasta, I wonder if you might have a wizard eye available?"

"By purest chance, yes, I do," replied Lady Ablasta with a sniff. She settled herself onto the ground, closed her eyes, and began the preparations for her spell. "Ready," she said momentarily.

"Send it off, then, and tell us what you see."

"Perhaps a view from above would be best," suggested Spontayne.

"Very well, it's off. I'm hovering above the corn, higher, higher ... there they are!"

"How many?" demanded Dreelix.

"Eight, ten ... looks like thirteen."<sup>3</sup>

"Choose a target and move in for a close-up," commanded Willowquisp. "Count the eyestalks if you would, please."

"I see six, evenly-spaced around the body. The eyes are red, just like the skin."<sup>4</sup>

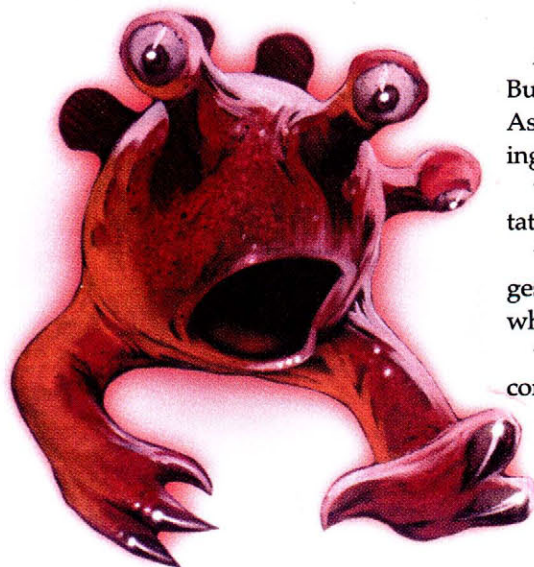
1. Gorbels are distant cousins of beholders and can easily be mistaken for them from a distance. The gorbels appear as a red, rubbery sphere, floating suspended in midair like a balloon. A ring of six eyes on narrow, retractable eyestalks crown the top of the gorbels' body, while two clawed limbs dangle down from below. A circular mouth ringed with numerous tiny teeth appears to the front of the two limbs. The gorbels lack the beholder's central eye, however, and is much smaller: 3 feet in diameter, compared to the beholder's standard 5' girth.

2. Had the gorbels spotted the guardsmen, there would have been no doubt about the fact, for gorbels immediately attack anything that moves (except other gorbels), often including trees swaying in the breeze.

3. Unlike beholders, gorbels travel about in small herds numbering up to twenty or so. The herds constantly move on to new territory as they deplete the vegetation of a given area. The size of the herd fluctuates as individual gorbels drift off on their own or two smaller groups merge into a larger herd.

4. Because of a gorbels' eyestalk distribution, the creature generally enjoys a full 360° vision. It is therefore difficult to approach one without being spotted; rogues incur a -20% penalty when attempting to Hide in Shadows within a gorbels' field of vision.

Fortunately, the creatures have only the approximate visual acuity of a human, without infravision capabilities. They sleep at night, pulling their eyestalks into their central body mass and closing their six sets of rubbery eyelids.



"There you go," said Willowquisp matter-of-factly. "Beholders have ten eyestalks, these have six. Therefore, these are not beholders."

"Shhh! Keep your voice down!" demanded Dreelix. "Maybe they're just a different kind. Lady Ablasta, do these beholders have a large eyeball in the front?"

"No, they don't. Wait a minute, what's this? Goodness, they've got little arms and fingers! Or is that legs and toes?"

"Definitely not a beholder," confirmed Willowquisp.

"That still remains to be seen," argued Dreelix.

"What's going on?" demanded the Undermarshall, who had sidled up to see what all the fuss was about.

"Silence, please!" demanded Dreelix. "We are in the midst of intense magical reconnaissance, and interruptions are not helpful! We will inform you of all in time; for now, be apprised that these are no ordinary beholders, but a rare strain of mutant killer beholders! Have your men double their vigilance while we investigate further!"

"Mutant killer beholders?" gasped the Undermarshall, blanching at the thought. "I'll inform the men at once!"

As the warrior rushed off to do so, Buntleby directed a look of scorn at the Association President. "Wasn't that laying it on a little thick?" he asked.

"It does no harm to enhance our reputation," remarked Dreelix.

"Getting back to the monsters..." suggested Willowquisp. "Lady Ablasta, what exactly are they doing?"

"The one I'm watching is chewing on corn. It's floating in place, holding onto the stalk with both of its claws, and biting off ears of corn. Goodness, look at that!"

"What?" asked Buntleby.

"Its arms bend funny," she replied. "Not like elbows or knees, but more like tentacles!"<sup>5</sup>

"Okay, so just what is it we're up against?" Buntleby asked Willowquisp.

"From the description, I'd almost have to say gorbels," he replied, scratching his head. "But that doesn't make sense; if I recall correctly, gorbels live in the tropics. How would a herd of gorbels have made it all the way up here?"<sup>6</sup>

"Okay, so we're up against gorbels," said Buntleby. "How does that help us? What do we know about gorbels?"

"Eh? What's that? Gerbils?" asked Old Gumphrey from the back of the huddle, cupping his hand over his ear to make out the whispered conversation going on ahead.

"I wish I had my notebooks with me," lamented the elderly sage, ignoring the ancient alchemist. Old Gumphrey gave a snort of disgust and stopped paying attention. "I've never actually seen a gorbels, only read about them," continued Willowquisp. "They are mentioned only briefly in Ronassic's definitive work on the beholder races, I'm sure of it.<sup>7</sup> I just wish I could remember more of the specifics."

"Do they wield magic?" asked Dreelix.

"I don't think so," responded Willowquisp. "If memory serves, they're rather simple creatures, with an animal-level intelligence."

"Excellent!" replied Dreelix, rubbing his hands together with glee. "This will be even easier than I had hoped for! Has anybody got anything else for Lady Ablasta? If not, I say we head in there and let the Hunt begin!"

"I think I'll keep my wizard eye active, nonetheless," said the Conjuror Ablasta, struggling to her feet. "You never know when it'll come in handy."

"All right, we're going in!" Dreelix called to the Undermarshall. "Have your men at the ready for immediate action, in case any survive our initial assault! They'll no doubt scamper like frightened kittens at the first sign of our raw power, so be on your guard! Follow me, men! Uh, you too, Lady Ablasta." And Dreelix entered the cornfield, to disappear between the rows of tall stalks.

One by one, the other Monster Hunters followed into the cornfield. Old Gumphrey the alchemist was the last in line; as soon as the others were out of sight he turned and went back to the wagon.

"Shouldn't you be going with them?" asked the Undermarshall.

"Pshaw! I'm eighty-seven years old; let them go on without me! Besides, uh, as the most powerful and intelligent of the wizards, my expertise is needed here, as coordinator! What's that, Dreelix?" he asked suddenly, closing his eyes as if in telepathic communication with the rest of the party. "No, ahead another twenty feet, then turn right. Yes, that's it." Old Gumphrey turned back to the Undermarshall. "If you'll excuse me, I'm rather busy here." The armor-clad warrior, suitably impressed, backed off to give the old man room.

5. Gorbels have no bones. Their central body is basically a gas-filled bag, similar to a balloon, from which dangle the creature's two short legs. Each leg moves by means of numerous strips of muscle running the length of each appendage; gorbels can therefore bend their legs in any direction with equal ease.

Each leg ends in three sharp claws, two fore and one aft. The claws are the gorbels' only means of attack; the creatures inflict a total of 1-4 points of damage with their initial claw strike. Once their

claws have made contact with a victim, they latch on with a remarkable strength, automatically inflicting 1-6 points of damage on subsequent rounds. Once a gorbels has sunk its claws into a victim, nothing short of the victim's death causes it to release its grip.

6. While most often encountered in a tropical environment, the far-ranging gorbels can be found in nearly any temperate climate. Since their lighter-than-air gas performs best in warm areas, they do not stray too far from warm climates, as the cold tends to keep them grounded.

7. Much of Ronassic's master work—*Observations On the Sphere of Many Eyes, Its Habits and Behavior, Its Settlements and Community, And What Not To Do In Its Presence*—was incorporated into *I, Tyrant*. Gorbels are mentioned briefly on page 17 of this work, which erroneously states that the gorbels' eyestalks end in claws. The *MONSTROUS MANUAL*<sup>™</sup> tome mentions gorbels in passing (page 26); the best source of information is *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*<sup>®</sup> 14: *Fiend Folio Appendix*, where the obnoxious little creatures have their own listing.

Dreelix halted the Monster Hunters as soon as they were out of sight and earshot of the guardsmen. "Okay, what's the plan?" he asked.

"What's the plan? I thought you were leading this little expedition!" replied Willowquisp.

"What's our weapons status?" asked Buntleby. "I've got a dagger."

"As do I," replied Spontayne. Zantoulios brought forth his collapsible staff, and extended it to its full length.

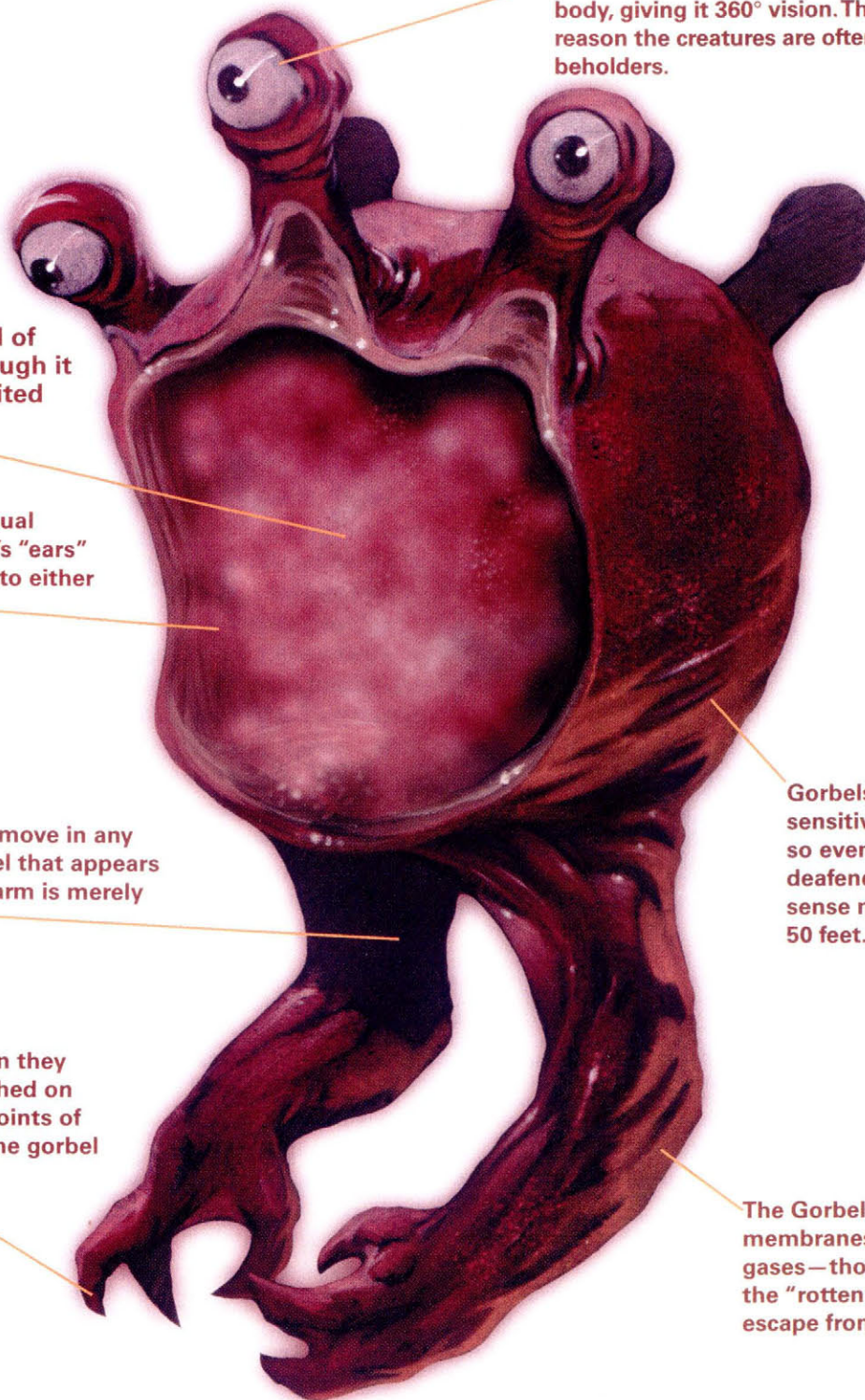
"Anyone else? Nothing?"

"Oh goodness, gentlemen," said the Lady Ablasta, rolling up the puffy sleeves of her embroidered gown and exposing several thin wands strapped to each forearm. "Here: wands of fire, frost,

lightning, magic missiles, paralyzation, and fear. Go easy on the wand of fear, though; it's nearly depleted. I've been using it on the neighborhood kids, the scamps!"

"You're a regular walking arsenal!" marveled Grindle, as the Lady Ablasta distributed wands and explained their command words.

## Gorbel



The creature's six eyes form a "crown" atop its body, giving it 360° vision. These are the main reason the creatures are often mistaken for beholders.

The gorbel's body is full of lighter-than-air gas, though it moves by means of limited telekinesis.

They aren't obvious to casual inspection, but the gorbel's "ears" are tympanic membranes to either side of its mouth.

Boneless limbs can move in any direction, so a gorbel that appears to have a "broken" arm is merely reaching backward.

The claws are stronger than they look. One a gorbel has latched on to a victim, it causes 1d6 points of damage each round until the gorbel or the victim dies.

Gorbels' skin is highly sensitive to air pressure, so even if blinded and deafened, they can sense movement within 50 feet.

The Gorbel's rubbery skin membranes allow certain gases—those responsible for the "rotten egg" smell—to escape from the body.

"It pays to be prepared," she sniffed.

"So we go in wands ablazing?" asked Buntleby.

"And the tanar'ri take the hindmost!" agreed Dreelix.

"Actually, I'd like to volunteer for the position of 'hindmost,'" said Willowquisp. The elderly sage was not one for combat. Buntleby handed him his dagger, just in case.

"Let's try to pick them off one by one," suggested Spontayne. "Lady Ablasta, is there one apart from the others?"

Lady Ablasta closed her eyes and reactivated her wizard eye. "Yes," she replied after a moment. "This way."

As they trudged on through the field, Zantoulios suddenly winced in an expression of disgust and started waving his hand rapidly in front of his face. "Ugh!" he complained. "Grindle, was that you?"<sup>8</sup>

"Was that me what?" asked Grindle innocently. "I didn't do anything."

Lady Ablasta halted them behind a row of corn; ahead, through the leaves, the Monster Hunters could see a floating red sphere and hear the sounds of crunching as the gorbels mindlessly chewed its meal. "I'll take this one," boasted Dreelix, Lady Ablasta's wand of magic missiles in his hand.

Boldly, Dreelix stepped through the row of corn to stand face-to-face with the gorbels. The creature

immediately stopped its meal and swung several eyestalks in Dreelix's direction. It mewled like a kitten,<sup>9</sup> released its hold on the cornstalk, and sped toward the Monster Hunter with alarming speed.<sup>10</sup> Dreelix bleated in terror but managed to fire off a shot with the wand.

The results were spectacular. The magical beam of energy no sooner touched the gorbels' skin than the creature exploded in a puff of flame.<sup>11</sup> Dreelix jumped and was half-propelled back into the midst of the other Monster Hunters, gorbels guts splattered over his head. A rain of gorbels parts fell down among the stalks of corn, fortunately still wet from a recent rain.

"Down!" warned Zantoulios. "Here come some more!" Sure enough, several more red spheres could be seen through the leaves of the corn stalks, apparently investigating the explosion.<sup>12</sup> The Monster Hunters crawled away in silence to huddle several rows distant.

"What did you do?" asked Willowquisp.

"One magic missile, that's all. I swear!" replied Dreelix, wiping slimy entrails from his face and hair.

"Lady Ablasta, if you've still got that wizard eye up and running, I'd be interested in hearing what those others are up to," said Willowquisp.

The Conjurer Ablasta composed herself, straining her senses to peer through her magical construct. "Three of them have investigated the explosion," she reported. "They're gulping down—huh!—it looks like dandelion fluff! Look at them go! They're like goldfish at feeding time!"<sup>13</sup>

"What's all that about?" Buntleby wanted to know.

"Beats me," admitted Willowquisp.

"Who cares? Let's go get them!" said Dreelix, eager for further combat now that he knew how easily the gorbels could be slain.

"Hey, go easy on my wands!" called Lady Ablasta. "I'd like them returned with some charges left, if you please!"

But Dreelix was having fun now. He raced through the cornstalks, hooting and hollering, with Grindle and Zantoulios right behind. Buntleby turned to his friend Willowquisp and suggested that he stay with the Conjurer Ablasta, and that she monitor their progress through her wizard eye from their current position. Then he and Spontayne followed in Dreelix's wake.

A few rapid-fire explosions told of several gorbels deaths. When Buntleby and Spontayne caught up to the others, they found them covered in gorbels-gore, grinning like idiots. "C'mon!" called Dreelix. "I think there's some more over this way!"

Two more gorbels popped over the next row and sped toward the Monster Hunters, circular mouths opening wide.<sup>14</sup> "I got this one!" called Zantoulios, his collapsible staff poised above his



8. Gorbels produce their lighter-than-air gas as a by-product of their omnivorous diet, which consists mainly of green foliage, bark, and trace amounts of scrap metal or ore, as well as any carrion they might come across. Small quantities of gas constantly "leak" out of the gorbels through their pores; the gas smells significantly like rotten eggs and often betrays the gorbels' presence before it is seen.

9. While normally silent, gorbels make mewling noises when curious. They lack the intelligence and vocal apparatus for a formalized language.

10. Gorbels usually float as a result of their gas-filled bodies and drift serenely in the breeze when in no particular hurry. They can, however, move with an innate telekinetic ability at a Movement Rate of 18 and have an aerial Maneuverability Class of C. The gorbels' speed and agility often come as quite a surprise to those accustomed to the beholder's relatively slow movement rate.

11. Unfortunately (for the gorbels), the creature's lift-producing gas is pyrophoric, exploding into flames upon contact with the air. (The gorbels' rubbery skin membranes allow certain

gases—those responsible for the "rotten egg" smell—to escape from the body, but these gases, while nauseating, are not pyrophoric.) Any slashing or piercing weapons used to attack a gorbels penetrate its balloonlike body, causing it to explode in a small fireball that inflicts 1–4 points of damage to anyone within a 5' radius. Magically-induced damage, such as that produced by a magic missile spell, have a similar effect upon the hapless creature.

To make matters worse, gorbels are not themselves immune to the explosive properties of their own gas. A properly positioned blow with a sharp weapon can cause a cascading chain reaction, blowing up several gorbels in turn if they happen to be in each other's blast radius.

12. Like beholders, gorbels have no external ears, but they do have two tympanic membranes, spaced equidistant on either side of the mouth, that give them a limited sense of hearing. Gorbels skin is very sensitive to the slightest of breezes; a gorbels explosion creates a small shock wave that other gorbels within 50 feet can easily sense.

13. The gorbels' mouth is the only opening in the gorbels' body, and so must perform a variety of functions. Not only is it the orifice through which the gorbels eat and breathes, but it also has a role to play in gorbels reproduction.

Gorbels are hermaphroditic. Each gorbels produces eggs within its hollow body cavity, and these eggs are fertilized only upon the explosive death of another gorbels. When a gorbels explodes, its balloonlike body is instantly ripped asunder, and eyestalks and appendages fly off in all directions. The explosion also frees the dead gorbels' "seed pods," burning off the harder outer layer and releasing the fluffy, dandelion-like interior cells. These cells float in the breeze and, if swallowed by another gorbels, act to fertilize its eggs.

Gorbels gestation time is about a month, after which small, 6" infants float out of their parent's mouth. The newborn gorbels grow to full size within 6 months. Gorbels live for 6–8 years.

14. A gorbels' tiny, sphincterlike mouth can slowly stretch to accommodate food as wide as 18 inches. The mouth is ringed with little teeth; these

shoulder, ready to swat the approaching gorbel like a living piñata.

It didn't turn out that way. Zantoullios' staff bounced off the gorbel without any visible effect,<sup>15</sup> and only Spontayne's thrown dagger prevented the creature from reaching the gangly wizard. It popped like an overripe melon, spewing entrails every which way.

Grindle, meanwhile, had put his borrowed wand in the sash of his stained robes and jumped up at the other approaching gorbel. Grabbing it by an eyestalk, he tucked it close to his stomach and belly-flopped on top of it. It burst asunder, squished nearly flat between the ground and Grindle's massive frame. Even the small explosion was muffled under Grindle's prodigious belly; when he rose to his feet, the only evidence of the battle was that his robes were a little more stained than normal, and now slightly singed.

Suddenly, a shriek rang out. "That's Lady Ablasta!" called Buntleby, rushing

toward the sound of the scream, Spontayne at his heels. Emerging between two rows of corn, they saw Lady Ablasta's predicament. A gorbel had approached her from behind and sunk its sharp claws into her back.<sup>16</sup> She hopped around in a panic, trying to shake the beast off of her, while Willowquisp frantically chased her, attempting to get into position to "pop" the gorbel with Buntleby's dagger without harming Lady Ablasta further.

Buntleby tackled Lady Ablasta around the knees, dropping her to the ground; Spontayne helped hold her still while Willowquisp poked the sharp

point of the dagger into the gorbel's skin. It popped with the obligatory fireball, sending the elderly sage flying backward into Zantoullios, who had just stepped through the row of corn. The two tumbled to the ground in a tangle of limbs.

Buntleby, meanwhile, was pulling the gorbel's claws out of Lady Ablasta's back with great

effort; even though the gorbel was no more, its severed

limbs retained their death grip.<sup>17</sup> "She's going to need medical attention," said Buntleby to the others.

"Here," said Zantoullios, pulling a flask from his robes. Unstoppering it, he helped the Conjurer Ablasta to a sitting position and watched as she drank it down. "Potion of extra healing," he said.

"Ought to fix her up in a flash."

"Let me see," said

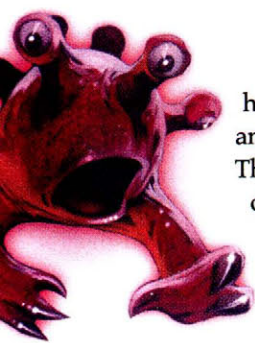
Buntleby, looking at the wounds on Lady Ablasta's back. As he watched, the deep claw grooves sealed themselves up, leaving only traces of blood to show that she had ever been injured. "Good as new," he said. "I don't think there'll even be any scars."

teeth are too small to inflict damage and are primarily used to hold struggling prey while the mouth expands to engulf the rest of the prey.

15. Because of their rubbery nature, gorbels are immune to all attacks from blunt instruments, like clubs, maces, hammers, and staves.

16. The gorbel instinctively strikes humanoid victims in the upper back and shoulders, where it is the most awkward for the victim to strike back at the gorbel. This is in the gorbel's best interests, for its Armor Class drops from 3 to 10 as soon as it perches on a victim.

17. A gorbel can "lock" the muscles of its feet into position at will and habitually does this when attacking. The ability is also put to good use at night, as well: Gorbels usually clamp tight onto a tree branch or heavy stone before sleeping, as this prevents the herd from being scattered by the wind.



Lady Ablasta turned her head with a look of anger flaring in her eyes. The reason was instantly obvious: Her nose had grown by an extra six inches, and green warts had popped up along both sides of her face. "You and your stupid potions!" she screamed at Zantoullios. In fear, the gangly wizard backed up several steps, bumping into Willowquisp and sending him toppling back down to the slippery ground.

"That does it. I have had it with the way this day has gone!" screamed Lady Ablasta, her neatly coiffured hair now standing out in all directions, several strands hanging in her face. Grabbing up Buntleby's dagger, she raced through the cornfield rows screaming like a banshee.

"What's all that screaming?" asked the Undermarshall, concern and a little tinge of fear in his voice.

Old Gumphrey closed his eyes as if mentally conferring with the others. "Everything's under control," he said.

Back in the cornfield, Grindle and Dreelix had encountered a group of four gorbels in an unusual position: they were on the ground instead of hovering in the air, waddling awkwardly about on their stumpy legs.<sup>18</sup>

"Oh, I like this!" said Dreelix, grinning evilly. He raised his wand and fired a magic missile into the nearest creature; its explosion took the gorb next to it along as well. The two remaining gorbels, eyestalks pointed at the two Monster Hunters and eyes wide open in obvious fear,



started vomiting up their recent meals in a panic.<sup>19</sup> Two more magic missiles, and they were no more.

"That should be nearly it," said Grindle. "Thirteen, wasn't it? We should be around ten or eleven by now. Do you think we should try to take one of others alive? You never know what we might be able to do with their body parts."

"Ah, let's just skip it this time," dismissed Dreelix. "I don't know how we'd harvest anything from a stupid creature that explodes when you kill it, anyway.<sup>20</sup> Let's just call this a public relations exercise and be done with it!"

"So where's Lady Ablasta?" asked Grindle. "We should get her to sniff out those last gorbels with her wizard eye." As if on cue, Lady Ablasta came shrieking through the corn, dagger held high, intent on bloody murder. She passed from view through another corn row, and, before either wizard could move, there were explosions from nearby—and a wild scream of savage triumph.

"Was that her?" Grindle asked timidly, all three hundred pounds of him quivering in fear.

"I'm not quite sure," admitted Dreelix, equally cowed.

By the time Lady Ablasta returned, the other Monster Hunters had found Grindle and Dreelix, and the six men stared in awe (and not a little fear) at their sole female member. She was a bedraggled mess: Her hair hung in wild disarray, her prim and proper garments were ripped and singed, and wet, glistening gorb guts covered her from head to toe. Even without the temporary troll features, she looked scary.

"I believe you all have wands of mine," she said, holding out a greenish hand. The wizards stumbled over themselves in their efforts to return them to her immediately. In return, Lady Ablasta handed Buntleby's dagger back to him. "Thank you, young man," she said to him. "Now then, shall we go?"

Old Gumphrey watched as his fellow Monster Hunters trudged out of the cornfields, as messy and disheveled as he'd ever seen them. "Your mutant killer beholder problem has been dealt with," Dreelix informed the Undermarshall with regal haughtiness. "You may notify the Duke that the Monster Hunters expertly defeated the menace, and any physical manifestations of his gratitude can be delivered to our meeting hall; I believe you know its location. Into the wagon, Monster Hunters! I believe the Undermarshall is ready to deliver us home!" The Undermarshall, in awe at the Monster Hunters' obvious power, scrambled to comply.

On the way back to the meeting hall, the Monster Hunters were a silent and introspective bunch—even Dreelix—each thinking his or her own private thoughts and thoroughly exhausted by their efforts. Only Old Gumphrey, who had rested comfortably in the wagon while the others went off on their Gorb Hunt, had anything to say:

"Those must have been some gerbils!"

*Johnathan M. Richards, like Willowquisp the Zoophile, has an inordinate fondness for some of the goofier of the AD&D® monsters. Fortunately for him, he's not likely to run out of goofy monsters any time soon.*



18. After eating a heavy meal, the gorb's excess weight forces it to land, where it awkwardly walks about on its two legs at Movement Rate 1. The gorb is then pretty much defenseless, unless it can manage to walk onto its enemy and claw him or her that way. For this reason, gorbels don't often overindulge, usually eating only until they begin to "hang low" in the air.

19. In an emergency, a gorb can force a regurgitation to get rid of excess weight (or "ballast"), vomiting up enough to get the creature airborne again, where it is both much more maneuverable and able to use its claws. Once the danger is over, the gorb can then retrieve its meal.

20. It isn't easy, but it is possible to harvest useful gorb byproducts. Gorb eyes can be used as substitute material components for the *wizard eye* spell, but must be harvested before the gorb explodes. (The explosion generally damages the gorb's eyes and eyestalks, making them useless.) The easiest

way to do this is to capture the gorb in a net or otherwise immobilize it (*hold monster* spells are useless for this task, as gorbels move about telekinetically and can continue to do so while under the effects of the spell), then cut off the eyestalks with a knife. Severed eyestalks do not cause the gorb to explode, as the eyestalks and limbs are not filled with the gorb's buoyancy gas. (This also explains why gorbels have 2 HD when they are immune to all blunt damage and explode instantly upon being pierced or cut: It allows them to take some damage to eyestalks or limbs before bleeding to death. Hitting a gorb in these areas during combat requires a called shot; the rules for called shots are found in the "Combat" section of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.)

Another byproduct of possible use is the pyrophoric gas produced in the gorb's hollow body, which, if extracted, can be used in the production of potions of *fire breath*. Since harvesting this gas

is nearly impossible without setting it off, however, the best receptacle for the gas is the gorb's body itself. Some have attempted fastening gorbels to catapult stones and bombarding them at enemy fortifications; if the impact doesn't detonate the gorb, a simple arrow shot can do so afterward. Others have carefully slain a gorb (with poison or by severing the eyestalks and limbs and letting the creature bleed to death), then carried it around like a balloon on a string for future use against enemies. The problem with this last approach is that the "gorb balloon" makes a good target itself, and the creature decomposes within a day or two in any case. Gorbels, never the most sweet-smelling of creatures, exude a horrific stench upon decomposition.

The gorb's rubbery hide, if taken intact, could be put to use in fashioning a lighter-than-air craft like a balloon or a zeppelin. Of course, it would take many gorb hides to create a large craft; to date, no successes in this endeavor have been documented.



# Nodwick & Company

From the Cartoon  
strip to your  
D&D® game...  
if you dare.

The story of Nodwick is a classic tale of boy meets party, boy hires on with party, boy becomes injured, crushed, punctured, smelted, flattened, stapled, eaten, and occasionally used to carry stuff.

A young henchman seeks his fortune and unwittingly contracts himself to a trio of adventurers who constantly rewrite the book on legendary exploits (mostly under chapters beginning with the word "don't"). They have defeated evil tyrants, slain rampaging monsters, looted ruined cities (often doing the ruining themselves, saving time), and generally brought adventure to those who would otherwise live peaceful lives. No job is too small for these heroes, primarily because they are often broke, bored, or both. Unfortunately, the outcome of their adventures is rarely positive for anyone involved, and many are the hamlets that would sooner face an outbreak of intestinal warts than lodge these "heroes" for a fortnight.

They are normally heroes-for-hire, but on occasion they take to an adventure that has personal meaning. Artax might be following up rumors of an ancient spell that grants complete control over housecats; Piffany could be on a quest to stop a holy war from breaking out over a spring of carbonated holy water; Yeagar might be seeking the fabled "Tavern of Infinite Happy Hour"; Nodwick ... well, Nodwick is probably seeking a loophole in his union contract that would let him seek out new and better employers, but that's not important.

Here are suggested AD&D® game characters based on those from the comic strip "Nodwick." Their game statistics are subject to change, due to the unfortunate realities of adventuring combined with not being too bright. They can be used to bring levity to a campaign, make PCs feel much better about themselves, or even lay waste to geographic areas the size of Canada.

The magical items listed with these characters are the bare minimum that they will have at any given time. Many odd wands, staves, swords, or *widgits* +2 have passed through their hands. In fact, there is a 5% chance that Nodwick is carrying any item in the *Player's Handbook* Equipment Table that a character might want. (Increase this chance by 2% for every cubic foot of gear Nodwick is currently hauling). DMs are encouraged to sprinkle a few strange items into this lot.

We do not take any responsibility for any permanent damage these folks do to your campaign, but we will probably snicker about it.

*Aaron Williams is an artistically inclined fragment of imagination, created by the collected unconsciousness from the attendees of Gen Con 19. As long as they continue to believe he exists, Aaron will continue drawing silly things from his home in Kansas City.*

by  
**Aaron Williams**

illustrated by  
Aaron Williams

## 7TH-LEVEL HUMAN MAGE

|                  |                                   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Strength         | 9                                 |
| Dexterity        | 15                                |
| Constitution     | 13                                |
| Intelligence     | 18                                |
| Wisdom           | 12                                |
| Charisma         | 10                                |
| AC               | 6                                 |
| THACO            | 18                                |
| Hit Points       | 24                                |
| Alignment        | Neutral good                      |
| Special Attacks  | Nil                               |
| Special Defenses | 30% resistance to pleas for mercy |
| Size             | M (6'4")                          |

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Spellcraft (16), Hunchcraft (18), Ancient Languages (18), Reading/Writing (19), Forgery (15).

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Quarterstaff, Hunchman.

**Appearance:** Artax is a tall scarecrow of a man dressed in plain, green robes. His most outstanding feature is his navel-length moustache (which contains enough food particles from previous meals to be the nutritional equivalent of one iron ration, if ingested).

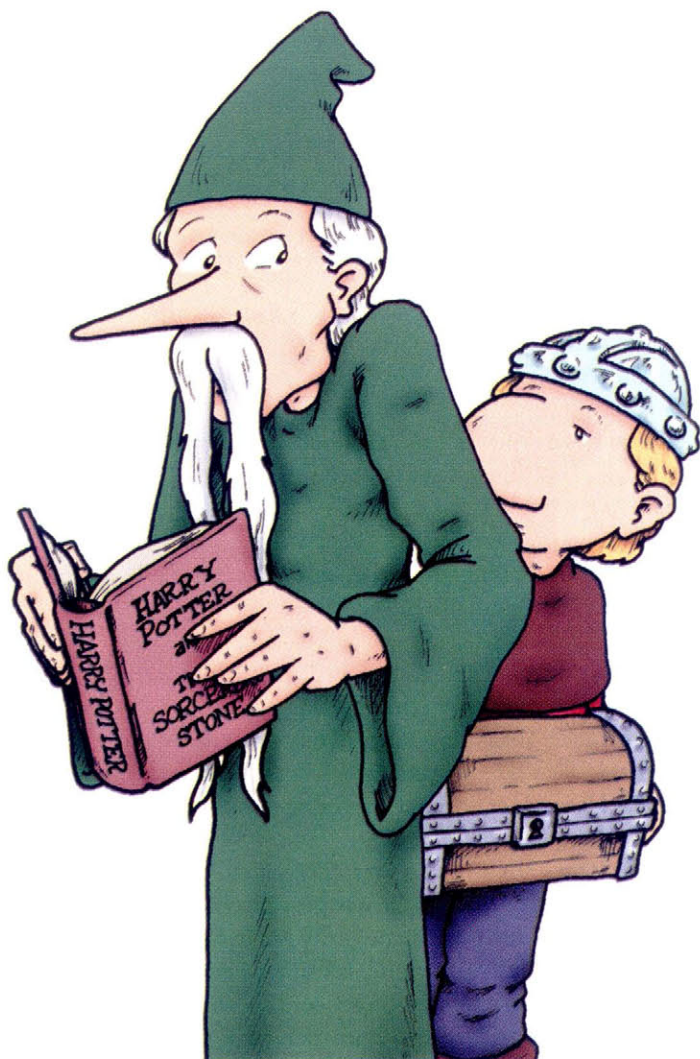
**Magical Items:** *Grimoire de Copperfield*. This magic tome is of Artax's own design. Among the pages one can find many unique spells: *Bigby's middle digit*, *power word: noogie*, *Mordenkainen's backscratcher*, *Kevorkian's rope trick*, and *Melf's marvelous meltdown*. There is also a much sought-after leaf in his book described by sages only as "Miss October."

*Wizard's hat of protection +4*. This rare item grants its wearer magical defense against attack. It appears as a small, green, conical hat, ordinary in every way. The item, available in all fashionable shops and fairs this fall, was designed for wizards who find bracers and rings a tad too obvious and overdone.

**Background:** Artax comes from a long line of magicians, a few of them successful. Some of his ancestors went on to greatness in the field of magic, while others were lucky enough to have procreated before they spent a long night in the lab followed by a longer night in a temple's ICU.

As a lad, Artax decided to become a mage, learned in all schools of magic. (He wanted to be able to transform a carrot into a top hat, pull out a rabbit, immolate it with a *fireball*, and communicate with its spirit to see whether it wanted to be brought back as a chicken or a turtle.) Soon he found that the most powerful magics were found by adventurers, so he struck out to seek his fortune. He discovered that relying on four-sided Hit Dice to stay alive wasn't much of a bargain, so he sought out companions to aid his quest for power and glory.

The first bunch he hooked up with were consummate professionals. They evenly distributed wealth in the party, aided



the helpless, and fought ancient evils. These weren't the folks Artax needed to hang with; power never came from even shares of anything, and the opponents they were going up against were downright dangerous! It was when the party was interviewing adventurers to replace a footman who had been mysteriously hit by lightning—Artax, the only witness to the death, swore a passing thunderstorm was to blame—that he met Yeagar. The party had just rejected Yeagar's application, which was good enough for Artax. The two have been together ever since.

**Roleplaying Notes:** Artax is most interested in new kinds of magic and related lore. He isn't quite as combat-hungry as Yeagar, but he knows all too well that the best stuff is usually guarded by nasty things. Luckily, a hunchman often comes in handy when one needs to deal with things that have large teeth and fire breath. As a mage, Artax doesn't hoard his spells, and he uses them freely in combat (which often results in collateral damage). As of yet, he hasn't learned any magecraft that requires the use of a hunchman as a spell component.

## 8TH-LEVEL HUMAN FIGHTER

|                  |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Strength         | 18/00                                |
| Dexterity        | 15                                   |
| Constitution     | 17                                   |
| Intelligence     | 10                                   |
| Wisdom           | 6                                    |
| Charisma         | 12                                   |
| AC               | 1                                    |
| THACO            | 15                                   |
| Hit Points       | 48                                   |
| Alignment        | Chaotic good                         |
| Special Attacks  | Nil                                  |
| Special Defenses | 50% resistance to attempts at reason |
| Size             | M (5'10")                            |

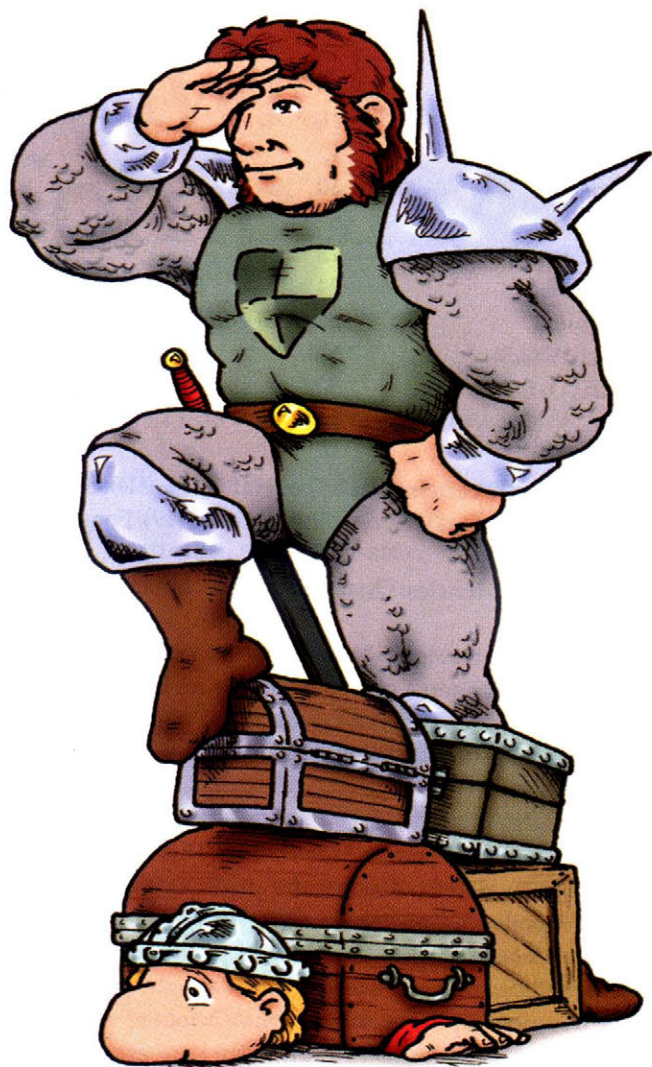
**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Scheme (12), Simple Solutions to Complex Problems (15), Running (11).

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Longsword, Henchman.

**Appearance:** Yeagar is a musclebound warrior, clad in a *chain-mail body stocking* +3 with a leather tunic and spiked shoulder armor. He is never without his sword (see below).

**Magic Items:** His sword is a *reaper of evil* +5, +10 vs. evil creatures (Intelligence 18, Ego 18), a weapon placed on this plane to demolish the foes of good and order. It can turn undead 3 times per day as a 15th-level cleric, it can *cure disease* with a touch, and it can allow the user direct contact with whatever good deity he or she worships, once per year. Sadly, however, it behaves in Yeagar's hands as a mere *longsword* +1, as it is currently in a state of catatonia. Upon claiming this weapon from a dragon's hoard (Yeagar says he slew the beast, despite the fact that the few scales it had left were gray, one wing had been lost long ago, and a prescription bottle for heart medication was found in the loot), he used the blade to fell a skunk, remove dragon poo from his shoes, and clear a path through a field of bile-weeds. After the sword fully ascertained that this warrior was the last person on earth who should be allowed near magical items, it attempted to leap from his grasp, accidentally ending the life of a rather saintly monk who was picking flowers nearby. It is believed that the sword will need years of therapy to return to its full strength.

**Background:** Yeagar learned very early in life that might makes right more often than not, and it doesn't hurt to be on the side of might. Having taken an interest in sharp, pointed objects, he cut a swath through many a dungeon, taking the loot to the nearest town, only to cut a swath through the local taverns. In perhaps the most enlightened moment of his life, he realized that he wasn't the brightest candle in the chandelier, so he hooked up with a (marginally) smarter person—a mage named Artax. Now, he had magic to back up his powerful



sword-arm, a comrade to rely on, and someone who might bail him out of the local lock-up.

**Roleplaying Notes:** It was Yeagar who pioneered many of the techniques in henchman use that adventuring parties use today. Far from relying on hirelings as mere human shields, he demonstrated their employ as projectiles, bait, door-jammers, and floatation devices. The inclusion of Piffany in his party hasn't curtailed his research in this field; he has merely had to demonstrate how his activities further "the greater good." When coming up with reasons to use a henchman as, say, a means to keep a portcullis from closing, treat Yeagar's Intelligence as 18.

Yeagar currently adventures with his companions Artax, Nodwick, and Piffany. He is many times the de-facto leader of the group, as the others will wearily attest to. Under his command, these heroes (and their henchman) have become notorious as the champions of the desperate (in other words, those who have little to lose by hiring them).

## 8TH-LEVEL HUMAN CLERIC

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Strength         | 8   |
| Dexterity        | 12  |
| Constitution     | 15  |
| Intelligence     | 13  |
| Wisdom           | 18  |
| Charisma         | 18  |
| AC               | 3   |
| THACO            | 16  |
| Hit Points       | 43  |
| Alignment        | Lawful good   |
| Special Attacks  | Finger wagging  |
| Special Defenses | 100% resistance to temptation,<br>denial concerning colleague's<br>behavior |
| Size             | M (4' 10")  |

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Healing (see below), Peacemaking (15), Shame/Tsk-tsk-ing (18).

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Quarterstaff, Verbal Correction.

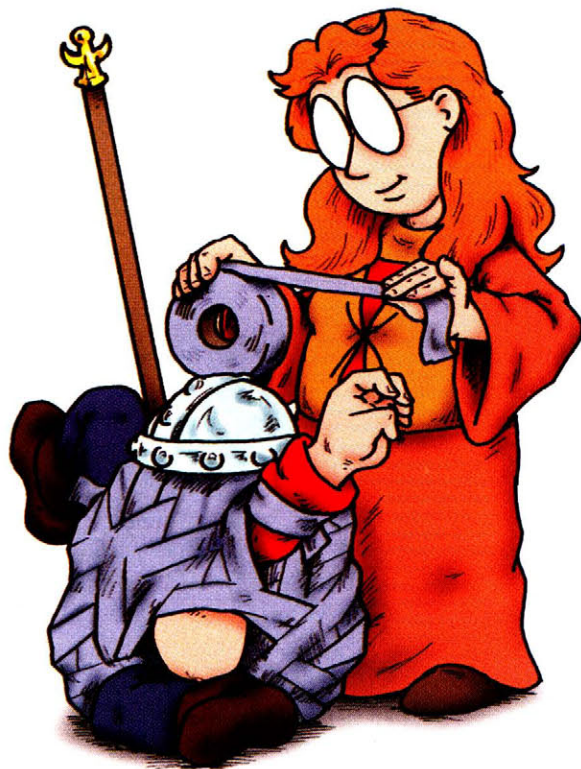
**Appearance:** Piffany is a plump, redheaded cleric of diminutive stature, dressed in a burnt-orange robe and tan tunic. She carries a staff with a gold adornment on its top. Her face is dominated by large, thick-lensed glasses.

**Magical Items:** *Staff of harmony.* This clerical artifact was made to aid the forces of good and fight naughtiness. It detects strong evil presences automatically if an evil creature of 5 Hit Dice or more comes within 30 feet. Moreover, it allows the wielder to *command* (as the spell) three times per day. As a weapon, it acts as a *mace* +3 against naughty creatures. In the hands of a lawful good cleric, it can be "charged" with three spells from the cleric's deity. The spells can be of two levels above the cleric's experience and are placed in the *staff* when the cleric meditates on her personal spells. It smells faintly of bubble gum.

*Duct tape of healing.* This is the mightiest mender of broken bodies the world has ever known. It can re-attach limbs and heads, revive the recently dead, and repair those who have been cut, bruised, mangled, squished, perforated, eaten, incinerated, or used to stop the gears of large machines. Anyone whose wounds or remains are wrapped in this stuff is cured of what ails 'em in 1 day. An entire roll of *tape* can cover a whole body. Piffany always has 4-6 rolls at any given time.

Piffany also wears *leather armor* +5.

**Background:** Piffany is the epitome of goodness, sweetness, and light. Her birth was said to be heralded by rainbows, songbirds singing in three-part harmony, and her entire village having a "nice day." She was given to her clerical order by her parents, who reportedly were sleep-deprived due to Piffany's 300-watt halo of purity keeping them (and most surrounding farm animals) awake at night.

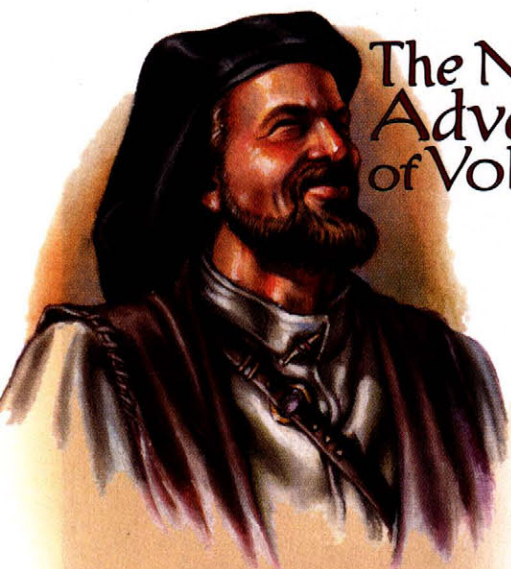


Piffany excelled at the clerical art of healing, especially when using a product of her temple: *duct tape*. This came in handy when she sought to bring light to the world via adventuring. She picked her companions carefully, choosing those who could most use her moral guidance. She finds that the one who needs her more frequently, however, is her party's henchman, Nodwick. Inexplicably, he always seems to wind up getting hurt in traps, caught in the jaws of monsters, and hurled into the lairs of dragons.

Her crusade for the forces of nice has been a long and hard one, but mostly for Artax and Yeagar, who find little problem with resorting to underhanded tactics of questionable morality. She hasn't given up on convincing them to turn from their semi-wicked ways.

**Roleplaying Notes:** Piffany would see the bright side to midnight in a coal chute. She has more "pip" in her than a wagon load of greeting cards. Due to her unfathomable depths of pithiness, her effective Charisma is treated as an 18, especially when she is attempting to motivate others. Though she adheres to her alignment with gusto, she is easily distracted by her erstwhile companions while they toss Nodwick into the jaws of peril. Any animosity toward Piffany should be considered an evil act. An attempt to harm her person is an act of fiendishness on a par with selling illegal substances to nuns while pulling the wings off flies as you pen the script for *Wing Commander II*.





## The New Adventures of Volo

By Ed Greenwood  
Illustrated by Ron Spencer

# The Ardeep

**V**olothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like freshly oiled helms gleaming in orc rendering-vats as the severed heads that formerly filled them are boiled away for use in broth!

This day I write of fabled Ardeep, known to Waterdhavians as "the nearest stand of deep green danger and mystery where elves and fey things lurk, and damp dirt is less spoiled than under the cobbles here."<sup>1</sup>

I remember well that this little wood was one of the features about which the great and grand Elminster refused to yield up lore to me (after I pounded his staff on his study floor out of sheer and unavoidable exhilaration at reaching that most dusty and cluttered shrine of sorcery—awakening the Old Mage and earning me one of his dirty looks),<sup>2</sup> but I've persevered on my own and am proud to present these admittedly fragmentary tidbits about an unjustly neglected corner of beauty that graces one of the busiest stretches of the Sword Coast.

### What All Know and the Eye Beholds

Ardeep Forest (often rendered "Ardeep-forest" by elven writers, to distinguish the present-day remnant from the larger, vital Ardeep of old) is a thickly grown wood whose verges are deceptively pleasant and home to many deer. Ardeep's interior is a place of ridges and breakneck gullies cloaked in thick vines and shrubbery, wherein mists are almost constant, wild boars roam, and ruins lie hidden beneath the forest loam and faintly glowing mushrooms.

Outlaws and a few lonely elves dwell here, and many elves and half-elves who dwell in Waterdeep come here from time to time to revisit the green silences of unspoiled wood. It's also a traditional spot for young lovers from the city to flee to when their families are actively hostile to the match. Harpers meet here from time to time, and rangers patrol its verges often, to ensure that neither large predatory beasts nor brigands settle in Ardeep and use it as a base of operations.



### Elminster's Notes:

1. Though Volo credits him not (an omission that is neither the first, nor will be the last, in a career studded with such impertinent carelessness), these are the words of the sometime minstrel and poet Donniglar Rhuel, who dwelt in the Dock Ward of Waterdeep, where he ran a shop that sold exotic oils and ointments to scent the body and enhance the texture and hue of the skin. These wares were, in fact, made by Donniglar and his wife Ranaera in their cellars, of ingredients far less prosaic than Donniglar was wont to admit. Ranaera died of winterchill fever in the Year of the Bridle (1349 DR), and the disconsolate Donniglar let his shop go to ruin as he drank and penned poems, dying himself in the fall of the Year of the Arch (1353 DR).

Members of Waterdeep's Jewelers' Guild (some of whom had business dealings with the poet) swear that Donniglar secretly fenced goods for, and safe-kept the coins of, the successful Waterdhavian adventuring band known as the Blackfangs Brotherhood, who vanished in a foray into the deep levels of Undermountain in the spring of the Year of the Morningstar (1350 DR)—and

that directions to the vast, unclaimed hoard of the Blackfangs are hidden in one of Donniglar's poems. These can yet be purchased, by the scroll (one whimsy to a parchment), from the recently-opened Melvar's Chapbooks and Folios, which stands on the west side of The Street of the Singing Dolphin, in Sea Ward.

2. To cleave rather closer to the truth than Master Volo can, let it be known that I refused to chat about Ardeep, or answer any of the other sixty-three queries of lore that he hurriedly read to me at the time, because I was a trifle busy neutralizing the fourteen uncontrolled magics Volo unleashed by playing with my fifth-best staff. He babbled out command words and incantations even faster than he spewed questions, as I recall, and grinned like a capering idiot as the spellwrack he'd created did its very best to destroy my study around our very ears, free half a dozen captive monsters, and allow the succubus that had been bound into the staff twelve centuries earlier to kiss me. I let her taste Volo instead, knowing he hadn't wits enough to be influenced ere I dealt with her. I was unsurprised to learn that he hadn't even wits enough to notice her attempt. Reader, thou art in the best of hands . . .

Few folk penetrate to the clearing at the very heart of the forest where Reluraun lies in his tomb—which is a good thing, because the elven hero is guarded by at least three baelnorn, who keep the living away from the tomb. They do this because the fearless warrior was twisted by evil magic in his final battle and is now a mad undead spirit akin to a wichtlin.<sup>3</sup> Reluraun wields an enchanted sword, hacking at anyone who ventures too near.

More than once an insistent band of adventurers has seen the hero's blade burst through the chest of a baelnorn who's sadly remonstrating with them to be gone. Then the sword darts about flashing and stabbing at empty air, forest birds, and leaping bunnies while its insane wielder screams wildly, wordlessly, and endlessly (a faint, faroff sound that one warrior<sup>4</sup> described as a "mournfully despairing whistle, like a kettle gone mad").

3. That is to say: Reluraun currently confronts those who venture too close to his tomb as a floating, flying, hostile pair of skeletal hands and eyeballs. It's not known if he's truly chaotic evil, as are "true" wichtlin, and he's certainly not semi-intelligent as they are—but his wits might be entirely overwhelmed by his lust to slay.

True wichtlin are elven undead with the following statistics: CE, AC 2, MV 9, HD 4+4, THAC0 15, 2 attacks per round (left hand—requires a successful saving throw to avoid being paralyzed for 2d4 rounds, and if an elf, become subject to a suggestion from the wichtlin; right hand—requires a successful saving throw to avoid suffering 2d6 points of poison damage); +1 or better weapon to hit, usual undead immunities and weaknesses, fire inflicts normal damage, immune to poison and paralysis. Wichtlin were fully detailed in Volume 4 (the DRAGONLANCE® Appendix) of the looseleaf MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® series. Reluraun has great strength and seems only superficially (that is, physical form only) to resemble wichtlin.

The undead Reluraun wields a sword +3, frost brand longsword, not the longsword +2, dragon slayer that lies on the breast of his effigy. The warrior's extremely lifelike effigy forms the lid of his coffin, which floats, levitating magically among preservative and guardian spells, alone in a domed underground vault. Reluraun's restless remains can't stray far from his tomb—but "far" might, according to some reports, not begin less than half a mile from the vault.



Reluraun wields an enchanted sword.

Ardeep also holds at least five other clearings: a cluster of three small, nameless glades near the northwest-ernmost edge of the forest (often used by lovers and runaways as temporary camps, and as a result watched by rangers, Harpers, brigands, and monsters); the famous Green Glade in southeastern Ardeep; and the comparatively recent Dancing Dell near the southern end of the wood.

The Green Glade is so called because, within its protective ring of elms, it's always spring. Great nurturing power is alive here and has been for centuries, though various creatures and faiths identify it as the work or manifestation of a variety of deities and name the glade accordingly. Elves find

the place restful, evil-aligned creatures are warded away as if by a protection from evil spell, and all healing magics cast

4. Sources, Master Volo! Sources! Identify the warrior, thus: Maerik Thaelcloak of Baldur's Gate, while on a foray into the heart of Ardeep in the Year of the Saddle (1345 DR), as a member of the now-defunct adventuring band who styled themselves "the Masters of Monsters." Two of the Masters are still alive: Maerik, who now dwells in the North Ward of Waterdeep, where he buys and sells distant horses and livestock not his own, to nobles who can't be bothered to travel and do their own haggling; and Rundakrist Tolstone, a gnome who lives in Secomber and makes a very good living plastering and painting. He's known for his skill at patching leaks in dwellings and his cheerful interior decorations, and is one of the reasons so many dwellings in that booming village look so pleasant to the eye. Both are rumored to be wealthy as a result of their careers as Masters—but if so, both keep their riches well hidden.



Within its protected ring of elms, it's always spring.

herein gain unusual power. (Minor healings gain the ability to cure *feeble-mindedness*; neutralize poison and cure disease spells always banish lycanthropy; and deafness, blindness, and the ravages of parasites are always lessened.) Any wood that does not house an enchantment begins to sprout and grow if brought into the Green Glade, even if it's charred firewood or has been a cut, stained, and polished stool for a century. This effect can be used by canny beings to mend damaged items, though it usually won't mend clear breaks.

The Green Glade can be hard to find. Fern thickets cloak its approaches, and no trail—no matter how vigorously cleared—survives for more than one night in the vicinity.

The Dancing Dell is a small, smooth bowl surrounded by a raised ring of earth, all of it cloaked in soft moss, short grasses, and ferns. At its heart is a needle of rock sacred to Eilistraee, of which more later.

There's little else of interest in Ardeep-forest except ancient tunnels and storage cellars dug by dwarves in the brief time of unity when the Fallen Kingdom flourished. Some of these still hold various treasures (including, in one memorable instance, a crystal that seemed to hold a miniature blue dragon in its heart—but in truth held a blue dragon in other-dimensional stasis that was released it when

the crystal was shattered), and most of them are discovered only by accident, when an intruder falls through decaying tangles of roots into hitherto-hidden depths. Some cellars are rumored to link up with the Realms Below, but it must be remembered that similar tales are told about every stand of trees between the Calim Coast and Icewind Dale.<sup>5</sup>

### The History of Ardeep

I may as well begin a recounting of Ardeep's past with those same dwarven delvings. Their makers dwelt largely underground, in hills well east of Ardeep, in a region they called "Dardath," and it should be noted here that at least one sage believes the reason the Fallen Kingdom's name has seemed lost for so long is because "Phalorm" was the name of the realm, and a bard's ballad penned soon after its dissolution referring to "the Phalorm Kingdom" as "the Fallen Kingdom" obscured the name. Others, of course, hotly dispute this tale and advance other names for the realm (most of them almost certainly names of regions within the kingdom), including Calandor, Glorea, Imristar, and Scathril.<sup>6</sup>

At the extreme southwestern tip of Ardeep lie the foundations of a hunting lodge built by the Waterdhavian noble family of Nandar some hundred-and-forty summers ago—a lodge repeatedly attacked by the elven archers who still dwelt in large numbers in the forest at the time, providing cover for the elves who were moving from Cormanthor and divers smaller eastern woodlands to Evermeet via ships provided by Harpers. (In recent years, as the Elven Court emptied in earnest, Mirt "the Merciless" of Waterdeep provisioned many such vessels.)

The Nandar family were driven out over and over again, returning each time to find the building torn apart as if by the trees themselves. Eventually, without any decisive battle, they grew tired of the constant expense and fruitless

5. Though in this instance, I can attest, the tales are true. Don't expect to find a gaping cavern or beckoning well, however; think instead of the hearts of trees as thick in the trunk as some cottages...

6. The tale of the Fallen Kingdom (a term that has been applied to more than one place and time) is a large topic indeed, best suited to another time and place—to which, accordingly, I've banished it.

7. A trifle more about Embrae Aloevan can be found in *The Secrets of the Magisters* sourcebook, penned by that paunchy and bearded rogue Ed of the Greenwood.

game hunts in which their caps and gear always sprouted elven arrows as silent warnings, and abandoned their lodge. All that remains today is the cellar pit and a few stones, beside the natural spring that made the Nandars choose this spot (a nameless spring that flows into the heart of the forest, creating two sizable pools on the way, then vanishes down a sinkhole).

Ardeep did boast a proud moon elven people at one time, with a royalty of its own that included at least two tall warrior-kings, Ilitharath and his grandson Tarosspur, and sometime later a line of queens who mastered both magic and the sword. One of these was Fildaerae "the Night Flame," who once made herself into a living torch in the sky above a battle, to give her archers light enough to slay a host of orcs.

Another was Imdalace, who crafted a spell that allowed her to take the form of a silently flying black blade as long as a man. In this form she went forth to slay foes, reading from the dying minds of those she transixed one thought or memory pertaining to whatever (single) subject she concentrated upon.

The third, Embrae Aloevan, accepted service with the goddess Mystra, hoping to protect the waning power of her land and people from intruding humans—but went mad very soon under the weight of what she saw and learned. The true extent of the decline of elvenkind, some believe, was among what she saw, though others insist she resisted evil possession by Bane in the only way she could, sacrificing her own mind to deny him access to Mystra's power and secrets.<sup>7</sup>

More than one floating tower has been seen above the trees of Ardeep down the years (the abodes of modern-day giants and mages, it's thought, rather than relics of Netheril or that favorite of drunken bards: ships from far "other worlds"), and the white dragon Cortulorralagalargath is known to have crashed down among its southeastern



Reports of floating towers over Ardeep are common.

trees when slain by the spells of the silver wyrm Teskulladar "Manytalons" over 400 years ago.

Most folk, if they think of Ardeep at all, see it as an abandoned elven tree-fortress. The scholars of Candlekeep warn that much of what little exists in written records of Ardeep is fanciful bardic invention and distorted folklore that might apply to other people and places rather than to the Faraway Forest. Ardeep seems destined to remain a wild, beautiful, and mysterious place.

### Ardeep Today

Ardeep holds few elves now, and—thanks to diligent ranger patrols—even fewer beasts larger and more dangerous than wolves and the occasional stirge or owlbear.

Curious folk, and those seeking forest herbs or adventure, have begun to venture into its outermost verges again. Bolder souls are warned that there is one part of Ardeepforest that sees energetic use.

Drow who worship Eilistraee often dance, on moonlit nights, in the Dancing Dell: the glade that surrounds the Ladystone, a finger of rock touched by, and sacred to, the goddess they worship. In this, they

are sometimes led by Qilué Veladorn of the Seven Sisters.<sup>8</sup> The Ladystone has powers that both guard the Dell and can strike forth as Eilistraee wills or her priestesses bid, and the goddess herself has been known to manifest in or above the Dell, but to say more would be to indulge in unbridled speculation.<sup>9</sup>

Ed Greenwood was once identified as "living proof that Darwin's theory of evolution is correct." Lively debate continues to this day as to whether he's the "before" hairy ancestor poster boy, or somewhere early on along the development chain. His co-workers opt for further along the chain (at about the point where mankind achieves beer), but they haven't seen him eat.

8. As seen in the passages about Qilué found in the sourcebook *The Seven Sisters* and the novel *Silverfall* by Ed of the Greenwood. The former is amusing in its omissions (I edited it even more heavily than I tread upon the words of Volo), but the latter is one of the less fanciful—and therefore more confused, as life so often is—efforts by that well-meaning but often misguided scribe.

9. Which is, of course, something good Volos never do.

ALTERNITY®

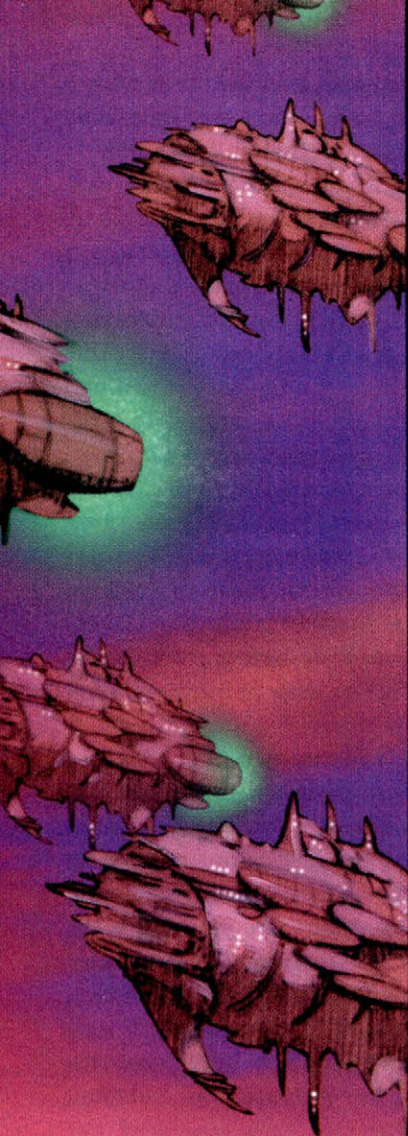
# New Frontiers

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**W**ith the ALTERNITY science fiction roleplaying game, players can adventure in a wide range of science fiction genres and settings. The STAR\*DRIVE® and DARK•MATTER™ campaigns describe only two. Another option is using ALTERNITY to tell stories in an established science fiction or science fantasy setting from television, films, novels, computer games, or even other roleplaying games. One of the oldest science fiction settings in roleplaying games is the TRAVELLER universe.

## **A Brief History of the Imperium**

In 2087, Earth humans discovered the secret of jump drive, a technology for traveling faster than the speed of light. With the jump drive, humans began to explore the nearby star systems, only to discover them already inhabited ... by other humans! In 2096, explorers from Earth brushed up against the edge of the Vilani Imperium, a vast Empire ruled by humans from a distant planet. The discovery rocked Earth civilization to the core. Who were these other humans, and where did they come from?

It turned out the Vilani Imperium was old and stagnant. Although vastly outmatched by Vilani technology and numbers, Earth went to war against the Imperium less than 20 years after their first encounter at Bernard's Star. Even more surprisingly, Earth won. In a series of wars, the Terran Confederation drained the resources and spirit of the tottering Imperium. Then, like barbarians sacking Rome, they conquered it.

So began the Rule of Man, called the Second Imperium, or the Ramshackle Empire by the Vilani. Although the infusion of "new blood" from the Terrans (or Solomani, as they came to be known) helped stave off the collapse of the Imperium for a few centuries, they ultimately could not prevent it. Interstellar civilization fell apart, leading to a period known as the Long Night, where many planets lost the capability for space travel, some even reverting to barbarism. The Long Night lasted for 1,500 years, with only limited space travel and trade between worlds. Some worlds banded together to form "pocket empires," mere shadows of the former Imperium.

### **About TRAVELLER and GURPS**

**This is not the first TRAVELLER article in *DRAGON Magazine*. First published in 1977, Marc Miller's TRAVELLER was one of the first SF roleplaying games. It presented a far-future universe of space opera adventure.**

**Steve Jackson's GURPS (The Generic Universal Roleplaying System) was published in 1986. Currently in its Third Edition, GURPS provides a set of rules for roleplaying in almost any setting. GURPS TRAVELLER, published in 1998, is the latest incarnation of the TRAVELLER universe, and Steve Jackson Games continues to support the setting with a variety of source material.**

The current calendar dates from the founding of the Third Imperium on the planet Sylea. Cleon Zhunastu, head of the powerful Sylean Federation, declared the Third Imperium in 4521 A.D. This became Year 0 of the new Imperium calendar, and Zhunastu became Emperor Cleon I. For more than one thousand years, the Third Imperium steadily expanded, covering more territory than either of its predecessors. It fought a number of wars with nearby civilizations, including the Aslan Heirate and the Zhodani Consulate.

It is now the 1120th year of the Third Imperium. Strephon, the 43rd emperor, sits on the Iridium Throne. On all sides of the Imperium are other interstellar civilizations, some friendly and some hostile. The last border war with the Zhodani Consulate ended in 1110, and Imperial ships still suffer raids from corsairs near the Vargr Extents. The region nearest these interstellar powers, the Spinward Marches, is the farthest frontier of the Imperium. It is a place of opportunity and adventure for those willing to seek it out.

## **Stellar Cartography**

The Imperium encompasses eleven thousand worlds spread throughout a region 700 parsecs across. Even with the fastest jump ship, traveling from one side of the Imperium to the other takes over 2 years. The Imperium maintains a vast network of express

## New Equipment

### Neural Activity Sensor (PL 7)

This backpack-sized sensor unit detects the electrical activity of different lifeforms up to 250 meters distance. The sensor classifies the lifeforms based on their level of activity (intelligence): insect-level (INT 1 or less), reptile-level (INT 2), mammal-level (INT 3), or near sentient/sapient (INT 4+) and displays the information to a dataslate.

Mass: 10 kg

Cost: 3,000

boats, or "Xboats," to carry messages and information quickly across their space.

Spinward (following the direction of the galaxy's rotation) of the Imperium lie the Zhodani Consulate, the Vanguard Reaches, the Great Rift, and the Aslan Hierate. The Imperium fought border wars with both the Zhodani and the Aslan in the past, although its current relations are far more cordial with the Heirate than with the Zhodani.

Coreward, toward galactic center, lie the scattered worlds of the Vargr Extents. The Vargr, evolved from Earth canines, are well known as raiders and corsairs throughout the Imperium. They have also been known to ally with the Zhodani, when their scattered political system can become organized enough.

Trailing the Imperium are the Two Thousand Worlds of the K'kree, known as "centaurs" to humans, and the Hive Federation, home to the most alien of the new species encountered by Humaniti.

Finally, rimward of the Imperium is the Solomani Sphere, the region of space claimed by human separatists who split from the Imperium centuries ago. Although the Solomani home world Terra is still an Imperial world (recaptured by the Imperium during the Solomani Rim War), the Solomani Confederation claims the heritage of the old Terran Confederation and organizes itself along similar lines. The Imperium has largely ignored this minor challenge to its authority.

## Technology

The technology of the Imperium and its interstellar neighbors is Progress Level 7 in ALTERNITY terms. As described in the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*, the two major PL 7 technologies are gravity control and stardrive, known as "jump drive" in TRAVELLER.

### Jump Drive

TRAVELLER jump drive is quite similar to the stardrive described in the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*. A jump drive moves a starship through dimensional barriers into an alternate space known as jump-space. Travel through jumpspace takes approximately the same time, regardless of the distance traveled. A normal jump takes 168 hours (seven days), plus or minus ten percent.

The distance traveled is based on the jump rating of the engines. A jump-1 ship travels one parsec (3.26 light years). A jump-6 ship, the highest possible jump rating, travels six parsecs (almost twenty light years) in a single jump. Ships must be a minimum of 100 diameters out from large bodies like planets and stars when they jump and when they return from jumpspace, to minimize gravitational interference.

Attempting to jump while closer than one hundred diameters to a large body, or a critical failure on a Navigation-jump-space *astrogation* skill check, results in a misjump. Misjumps can destroy a ship or send it in the wrong direction. A misjump can also affect the distance the ship travels, even exceeding normal jump limitations and sending a ship ten or twenty parsecs in a random direction. Roll randomly to determine the ship's direction, and roll 1d20 to determine the number of parsecs the ship jumps.

Entering jumpspace requires liquid hydrogen, used as both fuel and coolant for the ship's fusion reactor, and required to form a protective "bubble" around the ship in jumpspace. A ship's jump fuel capacity measures how many jumps it can make before refueling. Refined fuel is available at most starports. Some ships are also equipped with scoops to gather hydrogen from the atmospheres of gas giants, or water, which can be refined into usable fuel.

Jump ships can also perform "micro-jumps" of less than one parsec distance,

but any jump of less than one parsec still takes a week and consumes the same amount of fuel as a one parsec jump. Still, this can sometimes be more efficient than using maneuver drives to reach a destination in a star system.

An important point with the TRAVELLER jump drive is that communication is still limited to the speed of light. The only way to carry a message to another system is on board a jump ship. The Xboat network carries news and information throughout the Imperium at jump-6 speeds. Freelancers are also employed as "information couriers."

TRAVELLER maneuver drives function the same as ALTERNITY induction drives, moving a ship through normal space without reaction mass or thrusters.

### Weapons & Armor

Most PL 7 weapons and armor from the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* are available in the TRAVELLER campaign setting. PL 7 melee weapons like the gravmace and power cestus are not available (TRAVELLER gravity technology isn't sufficiently miniaturized.) Common melee weapons tend to be more high-tech versions of lower-Progress Level weapons like cutlasses, combat knives, and stun batons.

Ranged weapons include lasers (by far the most common) and plasma guns. Stutter pistols (called stunners) are available but fairly rare. Multiply their Cost by 10. All PL 6 and lower weapons are available.

With the exception of the deflection harness, all forms of PL 7 armor are also available. TRAVELLER combat armor is similar to cerametal, while lighter armor is similar to a CF softsuit or battle jacket. Body tanks are called "battle-dress" in the TRAVELLER game.

### Communications & Sensors

A TRAVELLER short-range communicator is equivalent to a cellular phone (PL 5), while a medium-range communicator is PL 7 comm gear. ALTERNITY mass transceivers are not available; all forms of communication are limited to the speed of light.

Most PL 7 sensor technology is available, although gauntlets of various types are not used in the TRAVELLER campaign. They are more likely to take

the form of dataslates equipped with the appropriate sensor package.

### Computers

TRAVELLER computer technology is primarily PL 6 in ALTERNITY terms. Gauntlets, gridsuits, NIjacks, and artificial intelligence do not exist. Computers are usually found in dataslate form for day-to-day business, with desktop and mainframe computers handling the heavy work. The Grid is virtually nonexistent. Individual worlds have their own Grid systems of interconnected computers, but data travels too slowly between star systems to support an interstellar Grid. Virtual reality, gridcasters, shadows, and related technologies do not exist.

### Medicine & Biotechnology

The PL 7 medical technology from the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* is available in the TRAVELLER universe. Some additional pharmaceuticals are available in the TRAVELLER game.

**Slow** (PL 6) makes the world appear to slow down from the user's perspective. It lasts for 10 minutes and grants the user a -3 bonus on action checks during that time. When the drug wears off, the user suffers d4w damage.

Cost: 500 per dose.

**Fast** (PL 6) has the opposite effect of Slow. The world seems to speed up from the user's perspective as his metabolism slows down. Fast reduces metabolic rate by sixty times and lasts for sixty days, which seems to pass like one day from the user's point of view. When the drug wears off, the user suffers d4w damage. Fast is used primarily in survival situations to prolong life-support.

Cost: 200 per dose.

**Anagathic** (PL 7) drugs slow the aging process almost to a halt. The user ages only about one week per year, as long as a dose of the drug is taken monthly.

Cost: 20,000 per dose.

### Cybertech

Some PL 6 cybertech is available in the Imperium, but there is a prejudice against anything other than prosthetic cyberlimbs or similar replacement cybernetic gear. Such technology may

be considered a "Zhodani influence" and persons with too much cybertech risk being considered "robots" rather than "living beings" and therefore no longer entitled to rights as Imperial citizens. PL 7 cybertech isn't likely to show up anywhere outside Imperial Research Stations or similar places.

### Psionics

Psionic abilities were first studied in the Imperium during the Long Night, when many cultures turned introspective. They developed slowly for centuries before becoming more popular around 650, with the establishment of Psionic Institutes for the study and development of psionic abilities.

In the early 800s came a series of scandals around the Institutes. This led the Imperium to ban the practice of psionic skills, which remains the case to this day. Psionic Institutes still operate as underground organizations to find and teach mindwalkers and psionic talents. Psionics are still practiced in other civilizations, most notably the Zhodani, who are highly psionic.

**The militant  
Aslan make  
fierce and  
proud  
warriors.**



Mindwalker heroes and psionic talents are both allowed in TRAVELLER games. The psionic skills from the ALTERNITY game work slightly differently in the TRAVELLER universe.

Biokinesis is limited to the specialty skills of *control metabolism*, *heal*, and *rejuvenate*. ESP is limited to the specialty skills of *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *empathy*, *mind reading*, *precognition*, and *sensitivity*. Telekinesis is limited to the specialty skills of *levitation* and *psychokinetics*. Telepathy is limited to the specialty skills of *contact*, *mind blast*, and *mind shield*. At the Gamemaster's option, the other psionic specialty skills might be available, particularly to Zhodani heroes. The TRAVELLER universe also has one other psionic broad skill.

## Ability Score Limits

| Species    | STR  | DEX  | CON  | INT  | WIL  | PER  |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Aslan      | 6-15 | 4-13 | 4-14 | 4-14 | 4-14 | 4-14 |
| Droyne     |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Worker     | 4-13 | 4-13 | 4-12 | 4-12 | 4-12 | 4-12 |
| Warrior    | 4-13 | 4-14 | 4-12 | 4-12 | 4-13 | 4-12 |
| Drone      | 4-12 | 4-14 | 4-12 | 4-14 | 4-12 | 4-14 |
| Technician | 4-11 | 4-15 | 4-11 | 4-15 | 4-12 | 4-12 |
| Sport      | 4-12 | 4-14 | 4-12 | 4-14 | 4-14 | 4-14 |
| Leader     | 4-11 | 4-12 | 4-11 | 4-16 | 4-14 | 4-14 |
| Hiver      | 4-12 | 4-14 | 4-14 | 5-15 | 4-14 | 4-13 |
| K'kree     | 8-16 | 4-13 | 8-16 | 4-12 | 4-12 | 4-12 |
| Vargr      | 4-13 | 4-15 | 4-14 | 4-14 | 4-12 | 4-14 |

## Free Broad Skills

| Species    | STR                        | DEX        | CON      | INT           | WIL       | PER         |
|------------|----------------------------|------------|----------|---------------|-----------|-------------|
| Aslan      | Athletics                  | Vehicle Op | Stamina  | Knowledge     | Awareness | Interaction |
| Droyne     |                            |            |          |               |           |             |
| Worker     | —                          | —          | Stamina  | Knowledge     | Awareness | —           |
| Warrior    | Athletics<br>Melee Weapons | Vehicle Op | Stamina  | —             | Awareness | —           |
| Drone      | —                          | Vehicle Op | Stamina  | Knowledge     | Awareness | Interaction |
| Technician | —                          | Vehicle Op | Stamina  | Tech. Science | Awareness | Interaction |
| Sport      | Athletics                  | Vehicle Op | Stamina  | Knowledge     | Awareness | Interaction |
| Leader     | —                          | Vehicle Op | —        | Knowledge     | Awareness | Leadership  |
| Hiver      | —                          | Vehicle Op | —        | Knowledge     | Awareness | Interaction |
| K'kree     | Athletics                  | —          | Movement | Knowledge     | Awareness | Culture     |
| Vargr      | Athletics                  | Vehicle Op | Stamina  | Knowledge     | Awareness | Interaction |



## New Psionic Skills

### Teleportation (Dexterity Skill)

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a hero to use the power of her mind to move instantly from one place to another without crossing the distance in between. The character moves herself and any clothing or equipment she is wearing, up to 10 kg. With only the broad skill, a hero can attempt either of the specialty skills below.

### Teleport

The character teleports from one place to another using this skill. The distance the hero teleports, plus her familiarity with the destination, determines the situation modifier.

| Situation/distance  | Modifier |
|---------------------|----------|
| Familiar location   | -1       |
| Unfamiliar location | none     |
| 1-10 meters         | -1       |
| 11-100 meters       | none     |
| 101 m-1 km          | +1       |
| 2-10 km             | +2       |
| 11-100 km           | +3       |
| 101-1,000 km        | +4       |

### Apport

This skill allows a hero to carry additional weight while teleporting. The amount of weight determines the situation modifier. If the hero fails the skill check, the object gets left behind. It is not possible to teleport only part of an object.

| Weight        | Modifier |
|---------------|----------|
| 1-10 kilos    | none     |
| 11-15 kilos   | +1       |
| 16-25 kilos   | +2       |
| 26-50 kilos   | +3       |
| 51-100 kilos  | +4       |
| 101-200 kilos | +5       |

In the TRAVELLER universe, objects retain their orientation and inertia when teleporting. Teleportation over great distances is dangerous due to the relative velocities involved. Teleports on a world's surface are limited to no more than one hundred kilometers. Changes in altitude result in potential energy changes. Teleporters who lose altitude increase body temperature, while those who gain altitude decrease temperature. Teleporting more than 100 meters up or down results in d4m damage. Gamemasters using these rules in a setting other than the TRAVELLER universe might wish to ignore these limitations.

## SPECIES

The TRAVELLER universe has many different alien species, but only six are considered "major" races—species that discovered jump drive technology on their own.

### Humaniti

Humaniti (old spelling: humanity) is wide-spread in the TRAVELLER universe, even more widespread than humans first thought. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, an extinct alien race known as the Ancients took samples of Humaniti from Earth and transplanted them to different planets. Several dozen Human races are known to exist. The three most influential Human races are the Vilani, the Solomani, and the Zhodani.

The Vilani are the founders of the First Imperium and still involved in the current Imperium. They developed on a world called Vland, a planet with sufficient biochemical differences from Terra that the Vilani relied heavily on a class of people known as shugilii, who prepared food so it was safe to eat. In general, the Vilani are conservative and mistrust

## New Equipment

### *Psionic Shield (PL 7)*

This light helmetlike device shields against psionic influence. It works like the *mind shield* specialty skill and imposes a +3 penalty on psionics use against the wearer. Psi-shield circuitry can also be incorporated into vehicles and buildings to provide the same protection.

innovation, preferring well-proven tradition. Their influence creates much of the Imperium's prejudice toward cybertech and mutations.

The Solomani originated on Earth, the homeworld of all Humaniti. They are a diverse and ambitious people, widely spread throughout the Imperium.

The Zhodani developed on Zhdant, a world outside Imperial space, with a lighter gravity than Earth. Tall, thin, dark-haired, and swarthy, Zhodani are prone to manifesting psionic abilities. Mind-walker intendants and nobles rule their culture, while the Thought Police ensure order and happiness among the proles (citizens). The Zhodani Consulate has long been a rival and sometime enemy of the Imperium, having fought several border wars with them. The Zhodani and their psionic abilities are the root of much of the Imperium's distrust of psionics.

Most of the branches of Humaniti have the same attributes and abilities as normal (Solomani) Humans. Some unusual Human races might have adaptations based on ALTERNITY mutations, particularly Adaptation (Environment or Gravity).

## Aslan

Aslan are fierce warriors. Explorers saw in them a vague resemblance to the great cats of Earth, so they are often described as leonine. They are human-sized, although heavier and more muscular. They have elongated, pointed ears and digitigrade postures. Males have prominent manes. Aslan have a specialized dewclaw in each thumb that folds back, jackknife style, into the digit.

### History

The Aslan evolved on Kuzu from carnivorous pouncing hunters. They developed a technological civilization and discovered jump drive technology in -1999 (2519 A.D., several centuries after Humaniti). Various Aslan clans fought border wars with Humans over the years, but the founding of the Third Imperium largely put an end to these conflicts. Many Aslan now live in the Imperium and even serve in its military. The Aslan Heirate is a large collection of planets and star systems spinward and rimward of the Imperium.

### Roleplaying

Aslan are fierce and proud. They have a clan-based culture and a strong territorial instinct. Owning land is the main goal of male Aslan, since land determines status and wealth in their society. Males concern themselves with the acquisition of territory, military matters, and politics. Females are interested more in trade, technology, science, and learning. Aslan Tech Ops are always

female, and Aslan Combat Specs are always male.

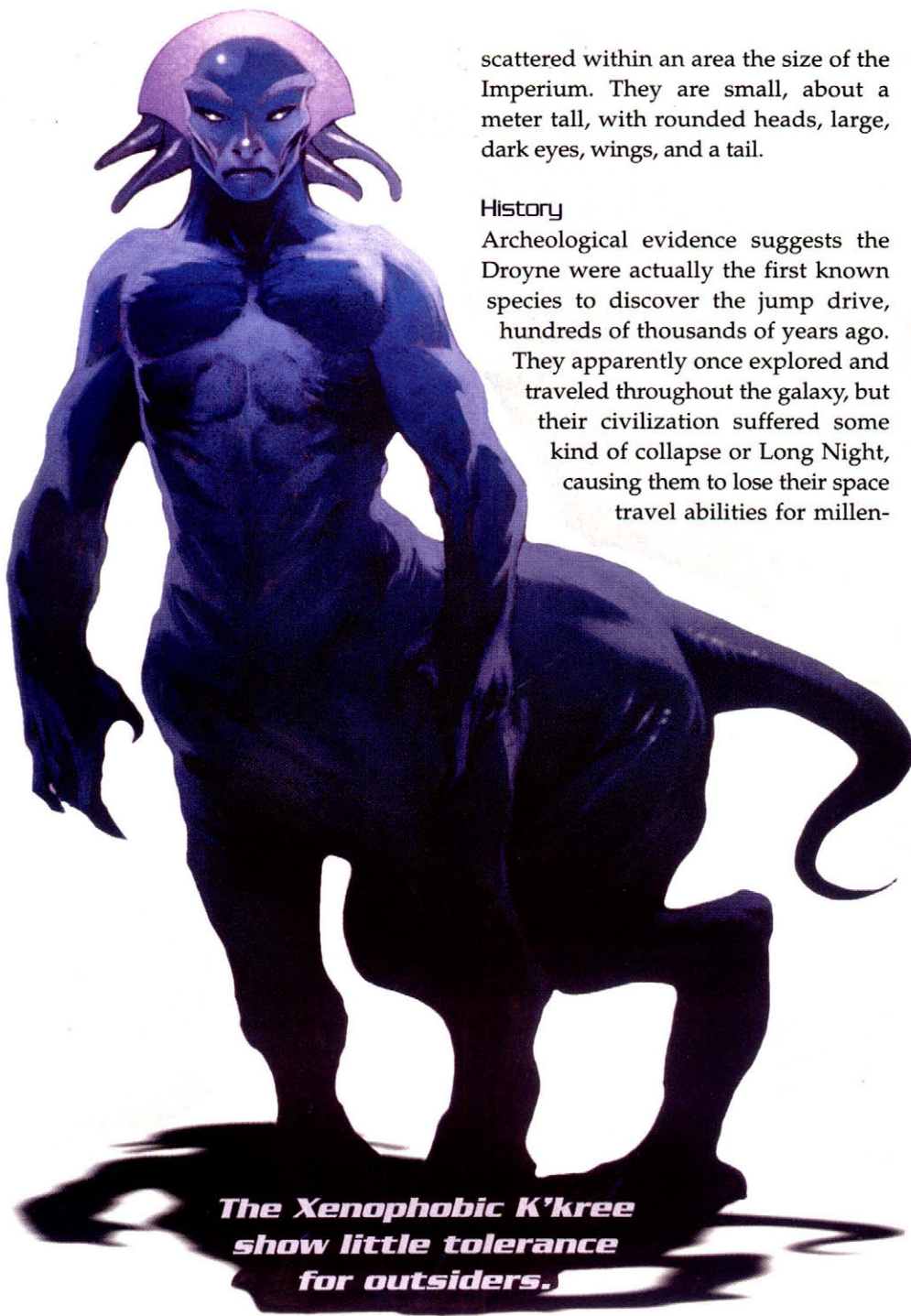
Aslan society is based on a rigid code of behavior emphasizing personal honor. Aslan are very polite and expect the same in return. Disputes are handled by ritual duels or mediated by clan leaders.

### Special Abilities

- **Dewclaws.** Aslan have a folding claw in each thumb that can be used in combat with a successful Unarmed attack—brawl or *power marital arts* skill check. The dewclaws inflict d4w/d4+1w/d4m damage (LI/O), plus any Strength bonus.
- **Senses.** Aslan have excellent night vision. They ignore penalties for low light conditions other than total darkness. Aslan also have very acute hearing, giving them a -1 bonus on checks involving hearing.
- **Sprinting.** Descended from running carnivores, Aslan are good sprinters. They can move at 1.5 times their normal Sprint movement rate for five



*The intensely curious Hivers are natural explorers.*



scattered within an area the size of the Imperium. They are small, about a meter tall, with rounded heads, large, dark eyes, wings, and a tail.

#### History

Archeological evidence suggests the Droyne were actually the first known species to discover the jump drive, hundreds of thousands of years ago.

They apparently once explored and traveled throughout the galaxy, but their civilization suffered some kind of collapse or Long Night, causing them to lose their space travel abilities for millen-

example, warriors are taller and stronger, while leaders develop greater brainpower.

Generally speaking, workers and drones are non-professionals, warriors are Combat Specs, technicians are Tech Ops, and leaders are Diplomats. Sports are deliberate exceptions to the caste structure, able to function alone away from Droyne society for long periods of time. They are the Free Agents of Droyne society and the most likely to be encountered away from a Droyne world (and therefore the most suitable as heroes). There is little individual freedom in Droyne society, since all the castes know their duties and follow them at all times.

#### Special Abilities

- **Flight.** Their wings allow Droyne to fly on worlds where the gravity is less than 1 G and the atmosphere is sufficiently thick (Earth-normal or greater pressure).
- **Invisibility.** The Droyne have the natural psionic ability to prevent other beings from detecting them. Treat this as a natural psionic talent rolled against the Droyne's Intelligence and costing 1 psionic energy point per minute of use. Droyne have psionic energy points equal to half their Will. The result of the feat check determines how difficult the Droyne is to detect: Ordinary +2, Good +4, Amazing +6. This ability does not affect robots or sensor devices.
- **Night Vision.** Droyne have excellent night vision, allowing them to ignore penalties for low light so long as there is at least some light available.

#### Hivers

The most alien of the major races, Hivers display six-fold radial symmetry. They have rounded bodies with six limbs. One limb serves as the "head," topped with six eyestalks and tentacles, while the other five limbs serve equally as arms or legs, each ending in six manipulative tentacles.

Hivers have only one sex and reproduce by exchanging cells each time they encounter another Hiver, using the limb opposite their head. (This process is called "shaking hands" by humans.) These cells gestate in the

actions before they must make a Stamina-endurance check for fatigue.

- **Territorial.** Aslan are all driven by their territorial instincts toward acquiring and holding land. Male Aslan desire land for its own sake, while females are more interested in the economic and resource potential, but both genders do everything they can to acquire land of their own.

#### Droyne

The reptilian Droyne are mysterious, and their original homeworld remains unknown. Droyne live on many worlds

nia. Another theory suggests the Droyne were scattered across the galaxy by the Ancients, much like Humaniti. Pictures of Droyne found in Ancient ruins suggest this might be the case.

#### Roleplaying

The Droyne are a generally peaceful and friendly species. Their society is divided into six castes: worker, warrior, drone, technician, sport, and leader. All Droyne are casted on reaching maturity. Members of different castes develop different biological adaptations to better serve their role in Droyne society. For

Hiver's body until a small larva drops off from the parent, roughly every forty days. Hivers consider these larvae pests, and they are left to fend for themselves for the first year of their lives. Those that survive are adopted and raised by the community.

### History

The Hive Federation is found trailing the Imperium. The Hivers developed from omnivorous scavengers on their homeworld of Guaran. Their strong curiosity drove them to develop technology and eventually discover jump drive in -4212 (306 A.D. on Terra). Most of their exploration of space was peaceful, since the Hivers shun combat. Hiver industry specializes in communications, electronics, and robotics.

### Roleplaying

Hivers are dominated by certain personal and cultural traits. They are intensely curious, and it is this trait more than any other that led them to explore space. They have a strong parental instinct that extends beyond their own children to other, less "developed" species (nearly everyone, from the Hivers' viewpoint). They try their best to guide others, which makes them manipulative. Finally, Hivers disdain any form of personal combat, even with ranged weapons. They prefer to flee rather than engage in combat. They're not pacifists—Hivers can and have developed combat robots and other impersonal weapons—they just don't like to get into fights.

### Special Abilities

- **Arms.** Hivers can use any of their limbs as arms or legs interchangeably. They effectively have the Ambidextrous perk for free.
- **Senses.** Hivers can see in the infrared, allowing them to "see" heat sources. Their hearing is lower frequency than that of humans.
- **Toughness.** Hiver skin and body structure makes them fairly tough. They have an extra Wound box.
- **Mute.** Hivers cannot speak. Their normal language consists of gestures with their tentacles and writing. They need technological translators in order to speak aloud.



***Vargr mercenaries are common throughout the Imperium.***

- **Cowardly.** Hivers avoid all forms of personal combat (treat as a 6-point Phobia) and cannot be Combat Specs.

### K'kree

Often known as "centaurs" by humans, the K'kree are herbivores with a herd structure. They have four legs, an upright torso with two arms, and binocular vision. They developed on the grassy plains of their homeworld, Kirur.

### History

The K'kree evolved from six-limbed herbivores into beings vaguely resembling Earth legends of centaurs. Their adaptations allowed them to gather additional food from the trees and spot dangerous predators from far away. In time, they developed intelligence and a community-based society. They also discovered their homeworld's moon was inhabited by a race of predators they called the G'naak.

The K'kree fought a war of extermination against the G'naak lasting a century. The war stimulated their development of military and space technology. Not long after the war, the K'kree discovered the jump drive and moved out into the galaxy. They fought an unsuccessful war against the Hiver Federation as well as skirmishes with the Vargr and the Imperium. For the time being, the K'kree maintain reasonably good relations with their neighbors, except for the Hiver Federation, which they have no contact with at all.

### Roleplaying

The K'kree are nervous and xenophobic. They intensely dislike outsiders, especially carnivores. They are only comfortable in groups of other K'kree, and become despondent and eventually ill when separated from others of their kind. They also dislike confinement. Only "crazy" K'kree (by their standards)

## TRAVELLER Resources

Huge amounts of information have been written about TRAVELLER in the setting's twenty-year history. Unfortunately, most of that material is out of print. You might find some in game stores that carry discontinued games.

Fortunately, the GURPS TRAVELLER line from Steve Jackson Games has a number of books for those interested in learning more about the setting. The GURPS TRAVELLER book contains a complete overview of the setting, including an A-Z encyclopedia of TRAVELLER information. The *Alien Races* books profile the major races of TRAVELLER, along with several minor species. *Behind the Claw* provides in-depth information on the Spinward Marches. *Star-Mercs* provides information on mercenary operations. *Far-Trader* describes merchants and trade in the Imperium. *First-In* looks at the Imperial Scout Service, and how to build new star systems and planets. *Starports* looks at building and using starports in the setting.

There is also a wealth of TRAVELLER information online. The Steve Jackson Games website ([www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com)) has the TRAVELLER News Service and links to other TRAVELLER sites. *Pyramid Magazine* online ([www.sjgames.com/pyramid](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid)) has a number of *Traveller* articles, including the companion piece to this article, which translates the STAR\*DRIVE setting for use with GURPS. The TRAVELLER Web Ring (<http://waystation.hypermart.net/webring/>) is also a good place to start looking for TRAVELLER information.

serve in the military or do similarly dangerous things involving spaceships or contact with alien beings. Even the craziest K'kree need some contact with others of their kind, so Gamemasters might have problems including K'kree heroes in a group of non-K'kree.

### Special Abilities

- **Increased Encumbrance.** Their greater lower-body strength allows K'kree to carry more weight. Increase the multiples on the Encumbrance Table by +2. So a K'kree can carry STR  $\times$  4

kilos with no penalty and up to STR  $\times$  8 kilos.

- **Running.** K'kree are built for running. Add +5 to their total STR + DEX for calculating their movement rates.
- **Senses.** K'kree have an excellent sense of smell, giving them a -2 bonus on all checks involving scent.
- **Phobias.** K'kree are claustrophobic and terrified of being alone. Treat these both as 6-point Phobias.

## Vargr

The Vargr evolved from Earth canines and were transported to the planet Lair by the Ancients hundreds of thousands of years ago. They have a packlike social structure, a proud nature, and little respect for formal governments or authority.

### History

The Vargr discovered the jump drive some five thousand years ago (around the height of the Mayan civilization on Earth) and have wandered the galaxy ever since, establishing colonies and sometimes living as raiders. They fought a number of minor wars with the Imperium centuries ago when the Third Imperium expanded into Vargr territory. They have been allied with the Zhodani in the past. The Vargr Extents are scattered along the coreward side of the Imperium.

### Roleplaying

Vargr are proud, curious, enthusiastic, and generally friendly. They retain something of a "pack mentality," so they like to work in groups (even groups of non-Vargr). They have a reputation for being easily swayed by charismatic leaders. This is the prime reason why Vargr governments rarely last for long; they are not based on institutions but on individuals. Vargr are proud and sensitive to disparaging remarks, particular those aimed at their heritage. Calling a Vargr "doggie" is perhaps the ultimate insult.

### Special Abilities

- **Claws.** Vargr have short claws on their hands that they can use with Unarmed Attack—brawl or power martial arts. Vargr claws cause d4s/d4w/

d4+2w in combat, plus any Strength bonus.

- **Senses.** Vargr have a developed sense of smell, giving them a -2 bonus on any check involving scent.
- **Sprinting.** Descended from running carnivores, Vargr are good sprinters. They can move at 1.5 times their normal Sprint movement rate for 5 actions before they must make a Stamina—endurance check for fatigue.
- **Swayed.** Vargr are often easily swayed, getting "caught up in the crowd." They reduce their Will Resistance Modifier by -1 for Interaction and Leadership checks.

## Using TRAVELLER

### in a STAR\*DRIVE Campaign

Gamemasters with existing STAR\*DRIVE campaigns might wish to use TRAVELLER material as a supplement. There are several ways to do this.

The first is to incorporate elements of the TRAVELLER universe into the STAR\*DRIVE setting. The different alien species can be transplanted, either as independent powers in the Stellar Ring or newly discovered species interacting with humanity. Races like the Hivers and the K'kree make good Externals to show up in the Verge and make first contact, given their unusual motivations and quirks. Gamemasters might also find different planets and star systems from existing TRAVELLER material useful for presenting heroes with new places to explore. TRAVELLER adventures adapt easily to the STAR\*DRIVE setting.

The TRAVELLER universe can also be a "parallel" or "alternate" universe for heroes to visit. A drivespace malfunction, or the discovery of a precursor artifact (like the dimensional gate from the *Tangents* sourcebook for the ALTER-NITY game) could send heroes from one universe to the other. They have to deal with the different conditions in the TRAVELLER setting while looking for a way to get back home (assuming they want to go back home).

Steve Kenson's first exposure to TRAVELLER was a black boxed set he got for Christmas 15 years ago. He's followed the development of the Imperium ever since.

# TRANSMISSIONS

By Andy Collins, JD Wiker,  
and Jeff "Zippy" Quick

## Gamemaster Hints

A memo meant for someone else in the Hoffmann Institute finds its way to the heroes by accident. The implications are that the Institute suspects an agent—perhaps one of the heroes—of stealing classified documents. The Institute is prepared to take drastic action, including eliminating the "mole's" entire team.

Of course, this all might just be a loyalty test on the part of the Hoffmann Institute, and there really is no spy. The heroes can get to the truth only if they confront the memo's author and gain her trust. But doing so might compromise her investigation and let a spy go free.



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READ & DESTROY

C:

Am now convinced information has been leaked to Fed. Document inventory missing classified documents. Fed investigation too close to material for coincidence.

Recommend action before entire team is compromised. Re-route, follow, or delete? Loss of entire team likely.

Please advise.

0

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The following is a paid advertisement by Austrin Partners, Ltd.

**Austrin-Ontis UNLIMITED**

Austrin-Ontis Unlimited is providing for Vergers' self-defense needs.

"We are very pleased by the Verge's interest in self-defense," said Austrin spokesperson, Gelaina deLoughton. "Money spent on preparation is money well spent."

"People with guns are safer people. While the Concord is doing its best to help, sometimes a starfall is too far away. That's when you need personal munitions.

"In an area of space where uncertainty is commonplace and External attacks are on the rise, experts recommend keeping a dependable light source, a two-week supply of uncontaminated food, and a loaded gun ready in case of emergency.

"We at Austrin-Ontis are proud to be a major supplier of ordnance for so many prepared Vergers," said deLoughton, "and want to remind everyone that an armed family is an unharmed family."

## Gamemaster Hints

Externals are hard to second guess, but it doesn't take a xenosociology degree to know they don't want well-armed targets. A small External strikeforce has been dispatched to disrupt Austrin-Ontis trade routes to the Verge. This is a good opportunity to have heroes interact with a small group of Externals. They could be traveling to the same destination as an Austrin freighter when the Externals attack.

Of course, attacking Austrin ships—even cargo ships—is a dangerous proposition. But a clever Gamemaster can drop clues from the strikeforce leading to the larger External threat.

# April Events & New Uploads

## From the Dragon's Mouth

### Humor in Gaming

Is your fighter PC more likely to be named Bob than Aragorn? Do you groan when you encounter another vorpal bunny that can only be slain with a holy hand grenade? *DUNGEON® Adventures* and *DRAGON® Magazine* editors Chris Perkins and Dave Gross open the floor to what is—and isn't—good humor in gaming. April 2, 6:00 P.M.

## MAGIC: THE GATHERING® Online Help

Whether you've just learned Starter MAGIC: THE GATHERING® or are a veteran player with lingering doubts about the Classic Edition rules changes, Adam Conus has the answers to get your Magic games running smoothly. Every Tuesday in the TCG Forum at 4:00 P.M.

## RPGA® Tonight

Join top members of the RPGA Network for a discussion of the latest Network events, hosted by Robert Wiese. April 7, 14, and 21 at 6:00 P.M.

## POKÉMON® Online Help

Every Thursday, talk live online with a Master Trainer of the POKÉMON Team! He will be available in the TCG Forum of our chat rooms to answer questions about the English POKÉMON Trading Card Game. Every thursday at 6:00 P.M.

## RPG Hour

STAR\*DRIVE® *ALIEN COMPENDIUM™ II* and DARK•MATTER™ *Final Church*

ALTERNITY game designer JD Wiker talks about two of his latest projects: the *ALIEN COMPENDIUM II* supplement, a guide to alien worlds in the STAR\*DRIVE campaign, and *The Final Church*, the first ever sourcebook for the DARK•MATTER setting, which plumbs the depths of early 21st century cults. April 7 at 6:00 P.M.

## Official Websites Announced

Even as Wizards of the Coast moves away from active support for some campaign settings, we're hard at work to make sure that the fans of these "sleeping" worlds continue to receive support. They're really your worlds, after all.

These official websites are linked from the Wizards of the Coast's "Other Worlds" site, directing players looking for more information on their favorite setting to these locales. The BIRTHRIGHT®, DARK SUN®, MYSTARA®, PLANESCAPE®, RAVENLOFT®, and SPELLJAMMER® campaigns all have official site status. You can see the whole lineup of worlds at: <http://www.wizards.com/dnd/OtherWorlds.asp>

What can you expect at these new homes? New canon materials to advance the settings, for starters. They're all tied back to the Wizards community for message boards, mailing lists, and chat rooms, so you're never far away from the soul of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

| Worlds      | Website   | Webmaster         |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| BIRTHRIGHT  | <a href="http://www.birthright.net">http://www.birthright.net</a>                     | Sindre Cools Berg |
| DARK SUN    | <a href="http://www.quasarhosting.com/athas/">http://www.quasarhosting.com/athas/</a> | Robert Adducci    |
| MYSTARA     | <a href="http://www.dnd.starflung.com/">http://www.dnd.starflung.com/</a>             | Shawn Stanley     |
| PLANESCAPE  | <a href="http://www.mimir.net">http://www.mimir.net</a>                               | Jon Winter        |
| RAVENLOFT   | <a href="http://www.kargatane.com">http://www.kargatane.com</a>                       | The Kargatane     |
| SPELLJAMMER | <a href="http://www.gwr.com/~eshum/rpg/sj/">http://www.gwr.com/~eshum/rpg/sj/</a>     | Static            |

## STAR\*DRIVE Webmaster Named

Chris West has taken over the job of organizing and updating the STAR\*DRIVE portion of the website. He'll be working hard at providing new materials, downloads, and setting updates for the ALTERNITY game's premiere campaign setting.

## New Columns on the Web

Ed Greenwood, Tracy Hickman, Eric Boyd, Steve Miller, Steven Schend, Dave Noonan, Ryan Dancey, and Jim Butler all have new columns appearing on the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, DRAGONLANCE®, and FORGOTTEN REALMS® webpages. Each article will be updated weekly or monthly, meaning that you'll see new material on the pages almost every day.

## Totally Twisted Trivia

Been playing the D&D® game since you were just out of the cradle? Own every supplement TSR ever printed? Well, even if you don't, we invite you to test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game. Prizes will be awarded! April 8 & 22 at 8:55 P.M.

## The Designers' Guild

GREYHAWK: *Slavers*

Designers Sean Reynolds and Chris Pramas team up to bring you *Slavers*, a

return to the classic AD&D® adventures of the same name. This latest adventure challenges PCs to search out and destroy hidden bases before the slave lords gather enough power to seize the people. April 9 at 6:00 P.M.

## Deck Deconstruction

Expert Analysis of Your Deck

This month, Randy Buehler invites you to choose from one of these MAGIC® Standard format decks: "Stompy," "Rebel.dec," "Bargain," "Mono-blue

## Live Chat Calendar

| Day         | Time      | Show                             | More Information  |
|-------------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|
| Sun. 4/2    | 6-7 P.M.  | From the Dragon's Mouth          | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/dragon/">http://www.wizards.com/dragon/</a>   |
| Tues. 4/4   | 4-5 P.M.  | MAGIC: THE GATHERING Online Help | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html">http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html</a> |
| Tues. 4/4   | 6-7 P.M.  | RPGA Tonight                     | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/rpga/Welcome.asp">http://www.wizards.com/rpga/Welcome.asp</a>   |
| Thurs. 4/6  | 4-5 P.M.  | POKÉMON Online Help              | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp">http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp</a>                                       |
| Fri. 4/7    | 6-7 P.M.  | RPG Hour                         | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/catalog/product.asp?tsr11617">http://www.wizards.com/catalog/product.asp?tsr11617</a>   |
| Sat. 4/8    | 8:55 P.M. | Totally Twisted Trivia           | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/chat/trivia/welcome.asp">http://www.wizards.com/chat/trivia/welcome.asp</a>   |
| Sun. 4/9    | 6-7 P.M.  | The Designers' Guild             | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/catalog/product.asp?tsr11621">http://www.wizards.com/catalog/product.asp?tsr11621</a>   |
| Tues. 4/11  | 4-5 P.M.  | MAGIC: THE GATHERING Online Help | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html">http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html</a> |
| Tues. 4/11  | 5-6 P.M.  | Deck Deconstruction              | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/chat/DeckPoll.asp">http://www.wizards.com/chat/DeckPoll.asp</a>   |
| Thurs. 4/13 | 4-5 P.M.  | POKÉMON Online Help              | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp">http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp</a>                                       |
| Fri. 4/14   | 6-7 P.M.  | TCG Hour                         | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/tcgs/">http://www.wizards.com/tcgs/</a>   |
| Sun. 4/16   | 6-7 P.M.  | Industry Edge                    | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/dnd/Movie.asp">http://www.wizards.com/dnd/Movie.asp</a>   |
| Tues. 4/17  | 4-5 P.M.  | MAGIC: THE GATHERING Online Help | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html">http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html</a> |
| Tues. 4/17  | 6-7 P.M.  | RPGA Tonight                     | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/rpga/Welcome.asp">http://www.wizards.com/rpga/Welcome.asp</a>   |
| Thurs. 4/20 | 4-5 P.M.  | POKÉMON Online Help              | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp">http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp</a>                                       |
| Fri. 4/21   | 6-7 P.M.  | RPG Hour                         | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/3e/welcome.asp">http://www.wizards.com/3e/welcome.asp</a>   |
| Sat. 4/22   | 8:55 P.M. | Totally Twisted Trivia           | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/chat/trivia/welcome.asp">http://www.wizards.com/chat/trivia/welcome.asp</a>   |
| Sun. 4/23   | 6-7 P.M.  | Sage Advice Live!                | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/dragon/article.asp?cat=main&amp;file=sage">http://www.wizards.com/dragon/article.asp?cat=main&amp;file=sage</a>                     |
| Tues. 4/25  | 4-5 P.M.  | MAGIC: THE GATHERING Online Help | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html">http://www.wizards.com/Magic/advanced/5E/Fifth_Ed_Rulebook/Section_IV.html</a> |
| Tues. 4/25  | 6-7 P.M.  | Wizards Profiles                 | —   |
| Thurs. 4/27 | 4-5 P.M.  | POKÉMON Online Help              | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp">http://www.wizards.com/contactinfo/Customer_Service.asp</a>                                       |
| Fri. 4/28   | 6-7 P.M.  | TCG Hour                         | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/magic/starter/Starter/welcome.asp">http://www.wizards.com/magic/starter/Starter/welcome.asp</a>                                     |
| Sun. 4/30   | 6-7 P.M.  | Special                          | <a href="http://www.wizards.com/gencon/GC2K/welcome.asp">http://www.wizards.com/gencon/GC2K/welcome.asp</a>   |

All times are Pacific Standard Time.

Control," "Mono-brown," and "Chapin.dec." Your decision determines his topic for the night! Cast your vote here, now! April 11 at 5:00 P.M.

### TCG Hour

The Major League Baseball Card Game As spring training draws to a close and opening day nears, Wizards takes a bold step into sports card gaming. Come hear from Major League Baseball brand manager Mark Gwyther about game basics for this new twist on America's pastime. April 14 at 6:00 P.M.

### Industry Edge

A sneak preview of the D&D® Movie Get behind the scenes of the D&D movie when cowriter, director, and producer Courtney Solomon and D&D legend Dave Arneson talk about their experiences on the film's set and what fans can look forward to from the big screen this fall. April 16 at 6:00 P.M.

### RPG Hour

3rd Edition D&D Fighters Ed Stark, D&D creative director, turns his attention to 3rd Edition's fighter class and its concept of feats. Ed also addresses weapons that are unique to the latest edition, or are radically different from their 2nd Edition predecessors. April 21 at 6:00 P.M.

### Sage Advice Live!

Ask your D&D questions!

Think you can stump the Sage with your questions about the D&D, ALTERNITY, and MARVEL SUPER HEROES® roleplaying games? It's tougher than you think! Now you don't have to wait for the next issue of *DRAGON Magazine* to hear the Sage's words of gaming wisdom. April 23 at 6:00 P.M.

### Wizards Profiles

Chaz Elliot, Miniatures Sculptor

Chaz Elliot, respected miniatures sculptor and former head of Wizards of the Coast U.K., discusses the Silver Anniver-

sary Edition minis and predicts what's to come for the Wizards miniatures department. April 25 at 6:00 P.M.

### TCG Hour

MAGIC: THE GATHERING Q&A

Joe Hauk takes a look at Starter 2000 and the included interactive CD, who this product will benefit, and how it has been tweaked from the previous MAGIC Starter set. April 28 at 6:00 P.M.

### Special

GEN CON® Game Fair Preregistration

In its 33rd year, Milwaukee's Game Fair is the largest game convention around. Will you be there? Talk with our Director of Events, Susan Scheid, about the events at this August 10-13 convention and how you can secure your spot with preregistration. April 30 at 6:00 P.M.





By Ray Winninger

This is a good point for relatively new readers of "Dungeoncraft" to check out the earlier installments available on the Internet. This month's column is the final installment of a series examining the anatomy and construction of an AD&D adventure. The adventure it describes, "The Scar," will appear in *DUNGEON® Adventures* (issue #80), letting you trace the whole project from concept to finished form.

In the past two installments, we examined strategies for evolving adventure concepts and building maps. This time, let's explore the process of turning a simple map into a full-fledged adventure.

### Identifying the Sub-Goals

Once the map is drawn, mentally recap the ultimate objective of the adventure and try to imagine how play might progress. What routes might the players take? What might they see or encounter along the way? Often, the easiest way to accomplish this is to break the objective down into a series of "sub-objectives" the players are likely to see as prerequisites to the main objective.

In my own adventure, for example, the players' primary objective is to escape from their orc captors. They face an obvious obstacle in the orcs themselves—it will certainly prove difficult for the unarmed and weakened PCs to

fight their way out of the complex. Before they attempt escape, therefore, it's likely that the players will try to tackle one or more lesser objectives. They might try to find makeshift weapons or equipment to improve their odds in combat, for instance. Or they might search for spellbooks and material components necessary to restore their magic-users' spellcasting capability.

A careful look at the maps for "The Scar" and trying to "think like a player" inspired this list of sub-goals:

#### To gain weapons.

Since the unarmed PCs stand almost no chance against the numerically superior orcs, this is a necessary first step toward any plan that involves the PCs' fighting their way out of the complex and a prudent precautionary step toward executing just about any other plan. There are three obvious ways to achieve this goal. The PCs can capture weapons from the orcs, they can find their own weapons stored somewhere within the complex, or they construct makeshift weapons from the stones, planks, and other items they find in the temple ruins.

#### To restore spellcasting ability.

As the adventure opens, the spellcasters in the party obviously lack the material components, spellbooks, and

other items necessary for making magic. Finding a method of restoring this ability would obviously increase their chances of escaping—a single *sleep* spell might be all the PCs need to elude their captors.

#### Identify less obvious exits.

The temple map depicts only one obvious exit to the outside, and it is certainly well guarded at all times. To increase their chances of escape, the PCs might search for a less obvious exit that isn't so well guarded.

#### Identify a "sneaky" method of taking out the orcs.

It's clear that the odds favor the orcs in a straight-up fight, but clever players might look for a more devious method of removing a large number of orcs from the picture. Perhaps there's some way to trap the bulk of the orc tribe within a conveniently collapsed cavern or behind a locked door.

#### Identify a potential distraction.

If the PCs decide to leave via the main exit, they might improve their odds with a distraction aimed at occupying their captors. Perhaps they'll free and arm the remaining prisoners, or devise a method to provoke a fight between two rival factions within the orc tribe.

### Need Help?

Send your questions and anecdotes about running AD&D® game adventures to:

#### "Dungeoncraft"

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[dmail@wizards.com](mailto:dmail@wizards.com)

Catch up on past installments of Dungeoncraft.

<http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp>

## Enabling the Sub-Goals

With such a list in place, you can make sure that you address each of these possible approaches as you design the adventure. Of course, nothing says that you must design the adventure so that every single one of the potential approaches works—maybe there *aren't* any less obvious exits—but it's a good idea to enable as many as you can. That way, you give the players plenty of options. For "The Scar," let's allow every approach we can devise, making some a bit more difficult to accomplish than others. Since this is the first adventure in a whole new campaign, there's no way to anticipate how the players will respond to the obstacles we place before them. Consequently, let's give them as many options as possible to decrease the chance that they'll become frustrated while the DM is learning to understand their playing styles.

Looking back at the past couple of installments, you can see that we've already accounted for most of the subgoals:



### To gain weapons.

It won't be difficult to sprinkle weapons and potential weapons liberally throughout the complex. As a rule of thumb, it should be relatively trivial for the players to locate a weapon that inflicts less damage than the orcs' weapons (grabbing a rock from a rubble pile down in the work area should be easy enough), and a bit harder to find weapons that equal those of the orcs. To find a weapon that is superior to those carried by the orcs, the PCs should need to do something daring or clever.



### To restore spellcasting ability.

Before play begins, the DM should ask each player to invent a brief story explaining how he or she came to be held captive. Depending upon the nature of their individual stories, the DM can then place the spellcasters' spellbooks and materials somewhere within the complex with the rest of the PCs' equipment. Furthermore, since there might be an old wizard's lab located somewhere within the temple, it might house the items necessary to allow wizards to cast a few carefully chosen spells.



### Identify less obvious exits.

While building the map last month, we included a few chimneys that lead directly to the surface. Of course, one or more obstacles will undoubtedly stand in the way of using these back-up exits, but the variety should provide the players with a nice set of options.



### Identify a "sneaky" method of taking out the orcs.

Last month, we included a wine cellar within the temple complex. Poisoning the large kegs stored in the cellar might take out each of the many orcs who sample the wine supply every night. A suitable poison might be located in the fungus garden that we also described last month. Similarly, let's plan to make it possible for the PCs to call upon the temple's ancient magic to scare or neutralize the orcs.



### Identify a potential distraction.

We've already recognized the possibility that the PCs might arm and free the remaining prisoners. As discussed last month, the PCs might also discover a way to unleash a powerful monster into the complex to cause general mayhem.

## Think Like a Player

Once you've identified a list of potential subgoals, it's worth thinking about whether the players are likely to pursue any even lesser objectives before tackling the subgoals, particularly if your list features more than a couple of entries. Once again, try to think like a player, anticipate, and address any new objectives you identify.

The list of possible sub-goals suggests that, to pursue any of these goals, the PCs must first resolve to explore the temple itself. Because it's impossible for them to form an interesting escape plan without gathering plenty of information about their surroundings—and because their opportunities to gather such information are limited—we should probably provide them with some assistance. One good solution would be to include a series of elaborate friezes depicting the construction of the complex, running along the temple walls. By learning to interpret the friezes, perhaps the PCs can glean

## THE SCAR: A RECAP

I began designing "The Scar" in these pages two months ago. To summarize, "The Scar" is designed for 1st-level characters, and it is intended to kick off a new AD&D® campaign. The adventure begins with all the PCs imprisoned by a tribe of orc mercenaries. The orcs are using the PCs and several other prisoners as slave labor to excavate the ruins of an ancient temple. The orcs believe that the temple ruins house a powerful magical item that will help them conquer the surrounding lands. Obviously, the players' primary goal is to escape. Secondly, they might decide to free their fellow prisoners, prevent the orcs from obtaining the item, or even attempt to gain the item themselves.

useful information about various areas in the complex without actually visiting those areas. These clues can vastly augment their "intelligence gathering" capabilities.

Of course, it's extremely unlikely that a list of potential objectives covers every possible approach the players might pursue. In your games, you'll quickly find that your players are great at tossing you unexpected curveballs. By identifying and enabling a number of possible sub-goals, though, you'll help guarantee that there is enough meat beneath the surface of your adventure to help you deal with the unexpected.

When I ran an early version of this adventure, for example, one of the PCs tried to take the orc leader hostage and bargain for the party's freedom. Although I didn't anticipate the tactic while I was designing the scenario, I fleshed out enough details about the temple complex while preparing for the possibilities I did foresee to easily improvise and adapt.

In fact, the capacity to adapt is so important that you should make sure you're not falling into the trap of *over-anticipating* the PCs' actions while identifying your objectives. Beginning DMs often make the mistake of designing their adventures around a single, expected plan of action. Should the players start to deviate from this expected plan, these DMs tend to react by subtly (or not-so-subtly) "steering" the party back on course. Of course, this sort of steering inevitably frustrates your players and takes control of the game out of their hands. In general, if you can't look at your adventure and easily identify either several different ways the players might pursue your main objective or several different objectives to choose from, it's probably time to go back to the drawing board.

## Fleshing Out the Challenges

Remember that the Fourth Rule of Dungeondraft states that "Good adventures always challenge the players *and* their characters." After you've identified and addressed the various objectives the players are likely to pursue, it's usually a good idea to take a fresh look at your creation and make sure you are adequately accomplishing these aims. At this point, you might look for ways to incorporate some of the tactics discussed back in issues #266 and #267 to help bring your challenges up to snuff.

"The Scar" looks like it has the potential to sufficiently challenge the players in a number of ways. First, the sheer number of potential approaches to escaping the temple promises to force the players to make a series of interesting decisions. Furthermore, several of the various objectives give the DM the opportunity to ask the players to solve puzzles. Using the mushrooms found in the fungus garden to poison the orcs' wine, for example, is a classic "item puzzle." We can also embed some interesting puzzles into the friezes that blanket the walls and into the various relics of the temple-builders that remain in the complex. Because the PCs aren't the only prisoners in the temple, we can also give the players plenty of opportunities for interesting interaction with the NPCs.

As far as challenging the players' characters is concerned, the fact that the PCs begin play without any weapons or armor should lead to some challenging combats. "The Scar" will certainly include some kind of mechanic that forces the PCs to make various saving throws or ability checks to avoid succumbing to weakness as their imprisonment drags on. Sneaking around the complex after hours and employing a few of the alternative escape routes should test the abilities of PC thieves. Making the most of the rudimentary spellcasting abilities at their disposal should adequately test the PC clerics and wizards.


## Doling Out the Rewards

After you've completed everything else, take another look at your adventure and think about how you plan to reward the players for overcoming the various obstacles you'll place in their path. Obviously, treasure and magical items are the easiest rewards to dish out. Although the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book gives you a good starting point for assigning treasure to the various creatures inhabiting your adventures, you should always modify these amounts based upon the circumstances at hand. If a monster is likely to be encountered when the PCs are in a weakened state (because there are other nearby monsters they might encounter first, for instance), you should increase the treasure guideline listed in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book by as much as 50 or even 100 percent. If, on the other hand, the PCs are likely to encounter the monster when the creature is at a disadvantage, you should lower the listed treasure by as much as 50 percent. Because the PCs are generally disadvantaged throughout the course of "The Scar," we'll need to be somewhat generous in allotting treasure to the orcs and the other denizens of the temple complex—maybe the equivalent of 5–10 gp per orc. The fact

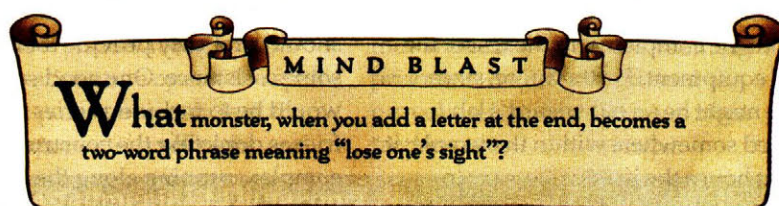
that the orcs are in the process of looting the ancient temple neatly explains why they are so wealthy.

As far as magical items are concerned, my own rule of thumb is to include two or three "important items" per adventure, but to make all of these items particularly difficult to find or recover. Exactly what constitutes an "important item" depends upon the average experience level of the PCs who will tackle the adventure. For this first effort, I might include a single *sword* +1, a *shield* +1, and a little *dust of disappearance*. I chose this last item because it might play a particularly interesting role in the PCs' escape. To keep things interesting, we can supplement the important items with twice as many lesser items—healing potions, minor scrolls, a *dagger* +1, or some *arrows* +1, and the like.

It's important to note that money and magical items are not the only rewards at your disposal. You can also reward the players with simple information. If you've been dutifully following the Rules of Dungeondraft, you should know a number of interesting secrets about your campaign world by this point. If you've done your job well, simple clues pointing to these secrets and the occasional major revelation make for rewards that are just as satisfying as money and magic. In "The Scar," for example, we can begin peeling back the curtain on the "mind flayer conspiracy" described way back in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #258.

Don't forget to pick up a copy of *DUNGEON Adventures* #80 to see how "The Scar" came out. And come back here in thirty days to explore some methods for helping your players create interesting adventurers. 

Ray Winninger lives in Illinois, California, and Washington. Over the last fifteen years, he's published a stack of game books and supplements that is exactly 19 1/2 inches high.



You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 14.

# Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

*It's April and time once again to look at some of the Sage's more unusual, offbeat, or just plain entertaining mail (including another installment of the continuing saga of the stoneworm spell). All questions were submitted in writing or via email by readers.*

**Near the end of an adventure I ran, the PCs encountered a dragon. The PCs won initiative and let the weakest party member attack first. So, a 3rd-level wizard, using a normal dagger, rolled a critical hit to the head and severed it. He rose, like, two levels. This seems wrong to me.**

## C Can crossbows be reliably used as melee weapons?

Ah, the joys of critical hit systems. The drama, the carnage, the extra effort required ... the potential to bring important encounters to abrupt and unsatisfying halts. Perhaps you should be glad that the dragon didn't accidentally behead your party's best character.

Since the critical hit system you're using isn't to your liking, you ought to consider scrapping it. You might want to try a new one, such as the system presented in the *Combat & Tactics* book (in which it is impossible to behead a dragon with a critical hit from a non-magical dagger unless the dragon is a very small one) or just dispense with critical hits altogether.

Also note that characters should not advance more than one level per adventure, and that an experience award for defeating a monster should be divided among all the characters who faced the monster, not just to the character who was lucky enough to strike the killing blow. (See Chapter 8 in the *DUNGEON MASTER*® Guide.)

**It occurred to me that some crossbows might be more durable than long or short bows in melee combat (as a last resort, of course). Can crossbows be reliably used as melee**

**weapons? I would like to know, because it seems to me that such use, when combined with some of the characteristics the *Combat & Tactics* book gives crossbows, would make them formidable competitors with the longbow/shortbow family, especially if a fighting style specialization was added for wielding bows, crossbows, and elven bows as melee weapons when missile combat is not an option.**

In general, missile hurling devices do not make efficient melee weapons, though whacking a dragon across the snout with a longbow or heavy crossbow is almost certain to get the creature's attention.

## Need Some Help With Your Game?

### In the U.S.:

"Sage Advice," *DRAGON*® Magazine,  
1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA.

### In Europe:

"Sage Advice," *DRAGON*® Magazine,  
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P.O. Box 2031, 2600 Berchem, Belgium +32-70-23-32-88

### In the U.K.:

"Sage Advice," *DRAGON*® Magazine,  
Wizards of the Coast, P.O. Box 61  
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[thesage@wizards.com](mailto:thesage@wizards.com)

The Sage cannot make personal replies;  
please include no SASE with your questions.

If some desperate character actually tries this, just treat it as a nonlethal attack. In the core AD&D® game, the character would suffer a -4 attack penalty (for making a nonlethal attack with a weapon), plus an additional penalty for nonproficiency. (I suppose proficiency with staff or club could negate the nonproficiency penalty.) Damage would be 1d6 for a longbow or heavy crossbow, 1d4 for a shortbow or light crossbow, and any damage inflicted would be temporary. (Temporary damage remains for 1 turn.)

Bows and crossbows are not intended for melee, and it is not possible to specialize for melee combat with such weapons nor to develop melee combat styles for them.

Bows and crossbows are not built to handle the kind of abuse melee weapons can take. Whenever the wielder scores maximum damage with a blow, have the item make a saving throw vs. crushing blow. (See Table 29 in the *DUNGEON MASTER*® Guide.) Bows save as thick wood, and crossbows save as thin wood. (Hoo boy, I can hear keyboards clicking and pencils scratching already.) Crossbows, of course, are built from thicker wood than bows are; however, bows are more supple and simple than crossbows. They stand up better because they can bend with a blow rather than break, and they have no small parts that can get knocked off or twisted out of alignment.

**Please settle an argument. During a battle in which a hill giant held the**

higher ground, the giant and the party's mage ended up with simultaneous initiative. The giant hurled a boulder, and the mage cast a *lightning bolt*. My ruling was that both attacks should arrive at their targets simultaneously, all things being equal. Since the trajectory of the boulder was such that it interfered with the path of the *bolt* (crossing the middle), I felt that the *bolt* should reflect back on the caster. Furthermore, since the *bolt* did not discharge on the boulder but merely bounced off, I ruled that the boulder attack could follow through with its successful hit. Thus, dead mage. Did I handle this properly?

Of course you handled things correctly—you're the DM.

On the other hand, you made a series of implausible rulings that all went against the players, which is not healthy for a campaign. In general, ranged attacks should not affect each other. (Longtime "Sage Advice" readers will recall an old discussion of shooting *fireballs* out of the air with *magic missile* spells, and a more recent discussion of the fine "art" of arrow catching.)

Let's consider a few things:

First, *lightning bolts* rebound off unyielding barriers. Hurling weapons, even giant hurled boulders, are not unyielding barriers. In fact, a *lightning bolt* probably should have blasted the boulder to bits and continued merrily on its way.

Second, you decided that the boulder and the *bolt* struck home at the same time. This is a fine way to interpret simultaneous initiative. You seem to have failed to consider that a *lightning bolt* moves, well, at the speed of lightning and that a boulder is not quite so fast.

Third, you also did not consider that the *lightning bolt* travels in an absolutely straight line while the boulder has a curved trajectory—perhaps rather eccentrically curved if the boulder was not perfectly round.

So, given the difference in speeds and paths it's extremely unlikely that the boulder and the *bolt* would meet. (The boulder would have been about to strike the mage as the *bolt* went arcing underneath to hit the giant.) As it happens, the game does have ways to account for such rare occurrences. The two that apply in this case are the giant's attack

roll and the giant's saving throw. Had the giant's boulder attack missed, it would be perfectly OK to account for that by saying the *lightning bolt* blasted it out of the sky. (That's why the game uses attack rolls, to account for all the variables an attacker cannot control.) Likewise, if the giant had made a successful saving throw against the *lightning bolt*, you might have attributed that to a little interference from the boulder.

In any case, you allowed a monster to evade an area effect spell by chucking a rock at it—not something you should repeat unless you want your players to start trying the same thing.

**If you throw extra holy water on something, will it inflict more damage? Let's say you throw three vials of holy water out of a bucket onto a zombie. Will it inflict the standard 2d4 points of damage or 6d4 since the bucket contains three vials worth of water? In addition, what happens if you immerse a holy-water-sensitive creature in holy water?**

If pouring holy water on undead by the bucket were an efficient way to use the stuff, holy water would doubtless be sold by the bucket.

The easiest and best way to handle bucket-delivered holy water would be to treat it as an area attack. First decide how far a character could toss the bucket or hurl its contents. (I suggest about 10 feet.) Have the attacker make a normal attack roll, but allow the target a saving throw vs. breath weapon for half damage if the attack hits. Considering a zombie's fairly lousy breath weapon saving throws, using a bucket could be quite effective, albeit costly.

Complete immersion in holy water would require about 20 gallons of the stuff for a human-sized creature (about 32 vials to the gallon), assuming the creature is dunked in a roughly human-sized tub. Such exposure might inflict 10d8 points of damage each round.

**How much damage does a humanoid bite inflict?**

I suggest 1 point for a Small- or Medium-sized humanoid who does not have a carnivore's jaws and teeth. You might also want to reduce any damage bonus from Strength by half (or disallow a Strength bonus altogether).

## The Obligatory Stoneskin Question

**Would any *stoneskin* charges be removed if, for example, a fighter attacked a mage with a normal longsword and the mage had cast *protection from normal edged weapons* in addition to *stoneskin*? The attack has no chance of harming the mage at all. If charges are removed from the *stoneskin*, just how futile must the attempted attack be before the mage protected by *stoneskin* stops losing *stoneskin* charges? What if, for example, the mage were surrounded by a *wall of force*? How long does a *stoneskin* spell last anyway? How much does the required diamond dust cost for one person to receive the spell?**

Any attack on a creature protected by a *stoneskin* spell drains a charge from the *stoneskin*, even if the attack is doomed to miss or cannot possibly damage the target. Note that there are innumerable circumstances in which attack is not possible. A solid barrier between the attacker and the target prevents attacks. If the *stoneskin* recipient stands behind a *wall of force*, her foes can hammer on the wall as much as they like, and no charges are drained from the *stoneskin* because the character is not actually being attacked despite the foes' efforts. In a similar vein, ranged attacks have no effect unless the protected character is actually within range and selected as the target or included in the attack's area of effect.

A *stoneskin* lasts 24 hours or until its charges are used up.

The diamond dust for the spell costs 100 gp.

I write as one who is constantly feeling low and dejected because his NPCs' best-laid plans are constantly being foiled by those quasi-artifacts, *scarabs of protection*. It is difficult to adjudicate when and where a *scarab* will have an effect and when it will not. For example, an NPC wizard cast an *Otiluke's acid cloud* spell at the party. The spell inflicts 4d6 points of

damage (no saving throw) and requires a saving throw for equipment. One of the party members had a *scarab of protection*. The player claimed that, since the spell didn't require a saving throw, the *scarab* allowed the character a saving throw, which, if successful, would keep the character's items safe. Is that right? Also, what should I do about spells like *Melf's acid arrow* and items with special abilities such as *vorpals blades* or *cubes of force*? What about special monster powers like a demilich's power to drain a soul? This power says that nothing but an *amulet of life protection* can stop it.

A careful reading of the *scarab of protection* item description makes it pretty clear that *scarab's* power to grant a saving throw when none is possible applies only to spells. It is reasonable to extend the protection to spell-like abilities, but

Note that a successful saving throw vs. an area of effect spell always keeps a character's equipment safe. So, your player was right about the *Otiluke's acid cloud* spell.

Some people in my group feel that since ogre magi learn to regenerate that they can teach it to anyone. I think its more like birds and flight—something that they're born able to do and just need coaching to learn. Am I correct in that way of thinking?

One either has the ability to regenerate or one does not. It cannot be "learned," no matter how good a teacher one has. On the other hand, one also cannot gain regeneration simply by assuming an ogre mage's form. Even a character *polymorphed* into an ogre mage is still herself. (Though that could change over time; see the description for the *polymorph other* spell.)

the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* says characters must sample from each container to determine the nature of the liquid inside. This method of identification seems to me to be somewhat hit-or-miss in its nature. Suppose a character sips from a vial containing a potion of *fire resistance*, a potion that lasts for one turn. Short of walking into the party campfire or the fireplace at the local inn within moments of sipping from the vial, how could a character possibly know what the potions effects are? This method of identification would seem adequate for such potions as *diminution*, *flying*, and other obvious effects, but woefully inadequate for such potions as *invulnerability*, *plant control*, or *water breathing*, to name just a few.

The rules for identifying potions are deliberately vague. The idea is to require players to be creative (or have their characters spend some gold on *identify* spells). Of course, the DM has to be creative, too. The DM must adjudicate the result of any test a character tries and must provide clues where appropriate. Neither problem is insurmountable. Just assume that the required "small sample" produces some magical tingle and that its effects last a minute or two. Now, let's run through your list:

#### Fire Resistance:

Holding a pinky up to a candle flame would be a sufficient test. (Cruel DMs will insist that the character poke the flame and risk getting burned.)

#### Invulnerability:

A small cut with a table knife will do the trick—the potion will prevent the cut.

#### Plant Control:

Can the character make a flower open or close?

#### Water Breathing:

Time for a dip in the horse trough. (If the test fails, at least the character gets a bath.)

## Exactly how much of a character's body can be regenerated using a ring of regeneration?

not to non-spell-like abilities such as breath weapons, diseases, or demilich soul draining. Nor does the *scarab* help a character avoid natural mishaps such as starving to death or dying of old age. The *scarab* also does not grant protection from weapon special abilities, magical barriers, or the indirect effects of spells. For example, a *scarab* wearer cannot see through magical darkness, hear while inside a *silence* spell, or walk through a *wall of force*.

The *scarab* will prevent damage caused directly by a spell. For example, if the *scarab* wearer is struck by a *Melf's acid arrow*, he gets one chance to make a successful saving throw against the spell. If the saving throw succeeds, the spell causes no harm to the character or to his equipment. If the saving throw fails, the spell works, inflicting damage for multiple rounds and possibly destroying equipment. On the other hand, if a character stands under a 10-ton weight suspended by a rope and a foe uses *Melf's acid arrow* to sever the rope, a *scarab of protection* won't keep the character from getting squashed.

**Hi! We are a lot of hardcore FORGOTTEN REALMS® and AD&D fans who disagree about the way the word drow is supposed to be pronounced. Some say it like "cow" and some like "row" [as in "row a boat"]. What is the correct pronunciation of drow?**

It's pronounced like "cow" as in: "How, now, dark drow?" As it happens, the esteemed editor of this fine publication, Dave Gross, insists that any being whose name rhymes with "cow" cannot possibly be as formidable or scary as the drow are, and prefers the "row" pronunciation. I don't find anything particularly scary about a couple of drow out rowing, but there's no accounting for taste (mine or Dave's).

**For some time now, the question of how potions are identified has bothered our gaming group. The rules are a bit vague, in my opinion, and it would be greatly appreciated if you could clear things up for us and others who have the same questions. The Player's Handbook says a potion's effects are unknown until some brave soul tries a small sample. Similarly,**

*Skip Williams imagines that watching people test potions must be a cherished form of entertainment in towns frequented by adventurers.*

# 2000 GEN CON GAME FAIR

Forget about Y2K and whether the millennium starts in 2000 or 2001. Summer is almost here, and with it the beginning of a new era in roleplaying—the 3rd Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

As revealed at the Big Announcement at the 1999 GEN CON® Game Fair (and in these very pages), the work to create this latest edition of the D&D® game took more than two years and the top talent of Wizards of the Coast. During that time we solicited feedback from over 1,000 playtesters globally and provided forums like *DRAGON® Magazine* and the 3rd Edition D&D web pages for fans to discuss the coming changes to their favorite game. We read and listened to these comments, using many of them to create an even better roleplaying experience.

All of this work culminates in the worldwide release of the 3rd Edition D&D game at the GEN CON Game Fair in Milwaukee, August 10–13, an event sure to be the high point of the show.

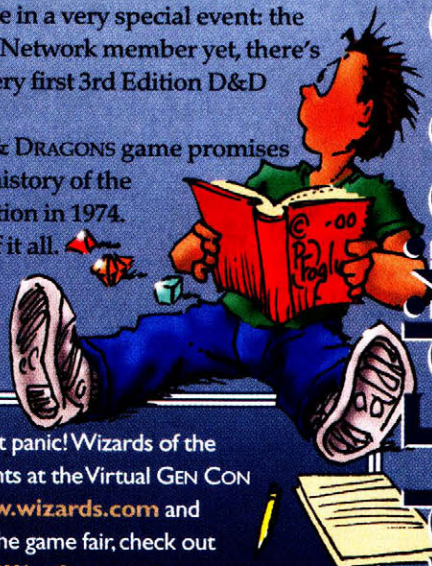
The Game Fair offers many opportunities to meet the design team for the new D&D game, as well as other Wizards designers hard at work creating the future D&D classics. This year, we've made it even easier to find out about the future of the D&D game: All of the 3rd Edition D&D seminars will take place in one location.

While at the show, participate in seminars about character creation, designing and running 3rd Edition adventures, as well as future releases for the new D&D game. You can discuss the philosophy behind the design team's work, hear why they changed certain rules, and take a sneak peak at the upcoming *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* and *MONSTER MANUAL™* tome.

Demos of the new D&D game will run throughout the Game Fair at the Wizards of the Coast® castle and in the 3rd Edition seminar room, the central area for 3rd Edition D&D events. RPGA® Network members can also participate in a very special event: the 3rd Edition D&D open. If you're not a Network member yet, there's still time to join and take part in the very first 3rd Edition D&D Open tournament.

The 3rd Edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game promises to be one of the biggest events in the history of the industry since the D&D game's inception in 1974. GEN CON is your chance to be a part of it all.

—Keith Strohm,  
Tabletop RPG Business Manager



If you can't make it to this year's show, don't panic! Wizards of the Coast will offer online coverage of the events at the Virtual GEN CON Game Fair. Just point your browser to [www.wizards.com](http://www.wizards.com) and follow the links. For more information on the game fair, check out <http://www.wizards.com/gencon/GC2K/welcome.asp>.

## 3rd Edition at the GEN CON Game Fair

### D&D Character Generation Workshop

Bring your brand-spankin' new copy of the 3E *Player's Handbook* to this workshop, where our experts will lead you through character generation. Come with questions, leave with a character!

Thursday at 10:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M.

### Adventure Design for 3rd Edition

With a whole new system comes a whole new design philosophy. Come to this seminar and learn how to design perfect, balanced D&D adventures.

Thursday at noon.

### D&D: Convert Your Campaign!

Work with the experts to convert your old campaign, characters, spells, or monsters to the new rules. Whether you want to blow up the world or make a clean transition, we can help get your new campaign off the ground.

Thursday at 2:00 P.M.

### 3rd Ed. Monster Builder's Seminar

Building a 3rd Edition D&D monster is all about balance, challenge levels, and out-and-out cruelty. Join a discussion about how we built monsters for 3rd Edition, and help build a few unique monsters.

Thursday at 5:00 P.M.

### Min-Max Your New 3E Character

Whether you're into powergaming, detailed roleplaying, or just learning the new rules, this seminar helps make the most of advanced character generation, including multi-classing, feats, skills, and prestige classes.

Friday at 10:00 A.M.

### To 20th level ... and Beyond!

"And my 40th-level paladin has six *holy avengers* ... Seriously, how will 3rd Edition handle level advancement beyond the 20th-level ceiling?"

Saturday at 2:00 P.M.

### What's Next for D&D?

Find out what Wizards of the Coast has in store for the first year of the new edition. The new *Player's Handbook* is out, and the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* and *MONSTER MANUAL* books are coming. What's next?

Sunday at 10:00 A.M.

### What's a DM to Do Now

*DRAGON Magazine's* own Sage, Skip Williams, and his panel of experts answer all your DMing questions regarding rules, tactics, strategies, and general advice.

Saturday at 10:00 A.M.

### You've seen it! Tell Us What you Think!

You've had the whole weekend to look at the new edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. You've played the demos, joined some events, and looked over the rules. Now tell us what you think and discuss your opinions.

Sunday at 2:00 P.M.



# Role Models

## Monster Mash!

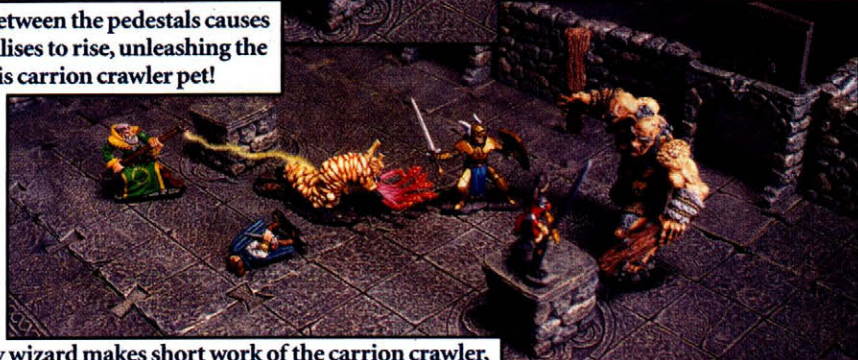
By Chris Perkins

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky

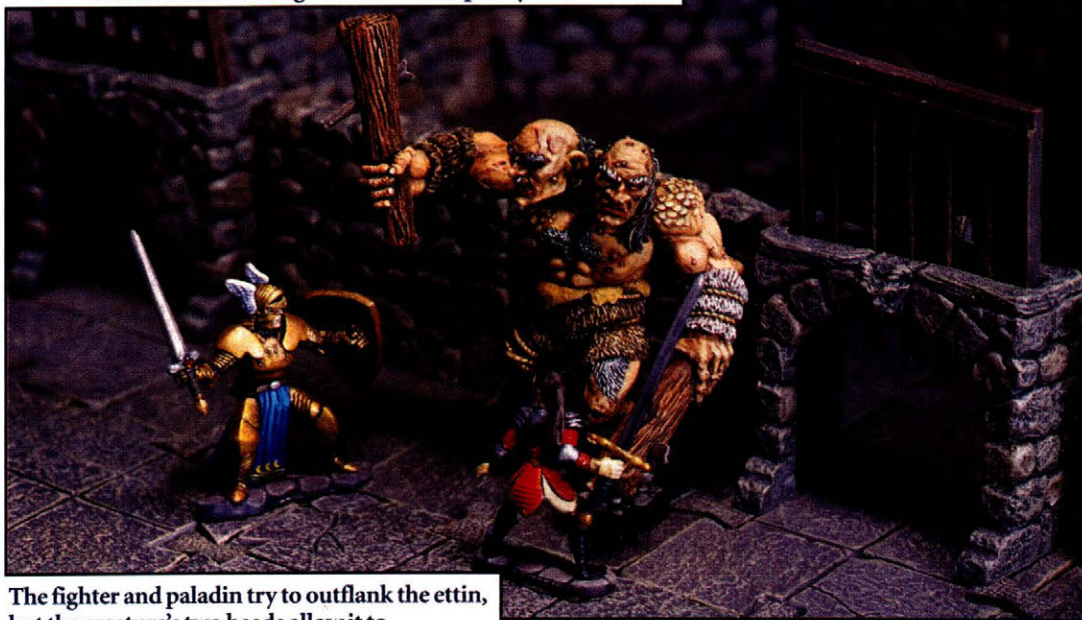
3rd Edition Miniatures painted by Jason Soles & Ben Tracey



Stepping between the pedestals causes the portcullises to rise, unleashing the ettin and his carrion crawler pet!



The party wizard makes short work of the carrion crawler, but not before the rogue succumbs to paralysis!



The fighter and paladin try to outflank the ettin, but the creature's two heads allow it to concentrate attacks on two separate opponents.

In last month's "Role Models," we discussed ways of using strange dungeon features such as pillars and glyphs to keep your players guessing. A simple torch might be the trigger for opening a secret door, a plain portcullis could be a mimic in disguise, and a demon archway might breathe horrible gas upon heroes who pass underneath. On the other hand, sometimes a torch is just a torch, so it's up to the players to figure out what's what based on the clues you give them.

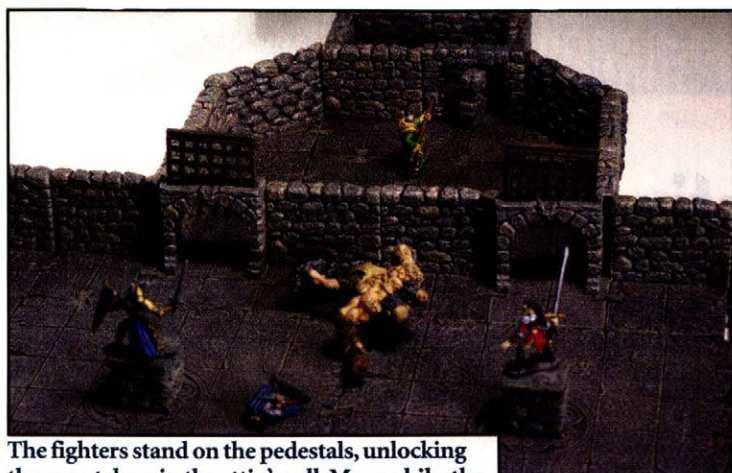
In this month's column, we present a short encounter you can incorporate into your own campaign or play as a "one night stand" with a group of three to five players. The adventure features two monsters, an ettin and a carrion crawler, as well as several unique dungeon traps and features.

Although we constructed the dungeon using the MASTER MAZE™ sets, the encounter can be played using a vinyl grid or similar substitute.

### The Scenario: Monster Mash!

A spiral staircase descends to a short tunnel ending at a locked wooden door. Rogues suffer no penalty to their Open Locks roll to unlock the door. The room beyond is unlit. If the PCs have a source of illumination and peer into the room, they see a 80' x 80' chamber with the following features:

- Two heavy, wooden portcullises set into the opposite wall. PCs can discern only darkness beyond the portcullises.



The fighters stand on the pedestals, unlocking the secret door in the ettin's cell. Meanwhile, the wizard readies his staff!

- Two 3'-high stone pedestals near the middle of the room. Broken statuary lies at the base of each pedestal.

- A circular glyph etched into the floor around each pedestal. The glyphs are red herrings and are neither enchanted nor trapped.

The room beyond the portcullises is shrouded by a *darkness 15' radius* spell. However, when the PCs approach within 15 feet of either portcullis, they can hear the sound of heavy breathing.

Trapped in the cell are an ettin and his carrion crawler pet. When any living creature passes between the two pedestals, a magical trap *dispels* the magical *darkness* and causes the twin portcullises to lift, releasing the two creatures from their cell. (The carrion crawler does not attack the ettin because the ettin is too big to devour, but it happily dines on the heroes!)

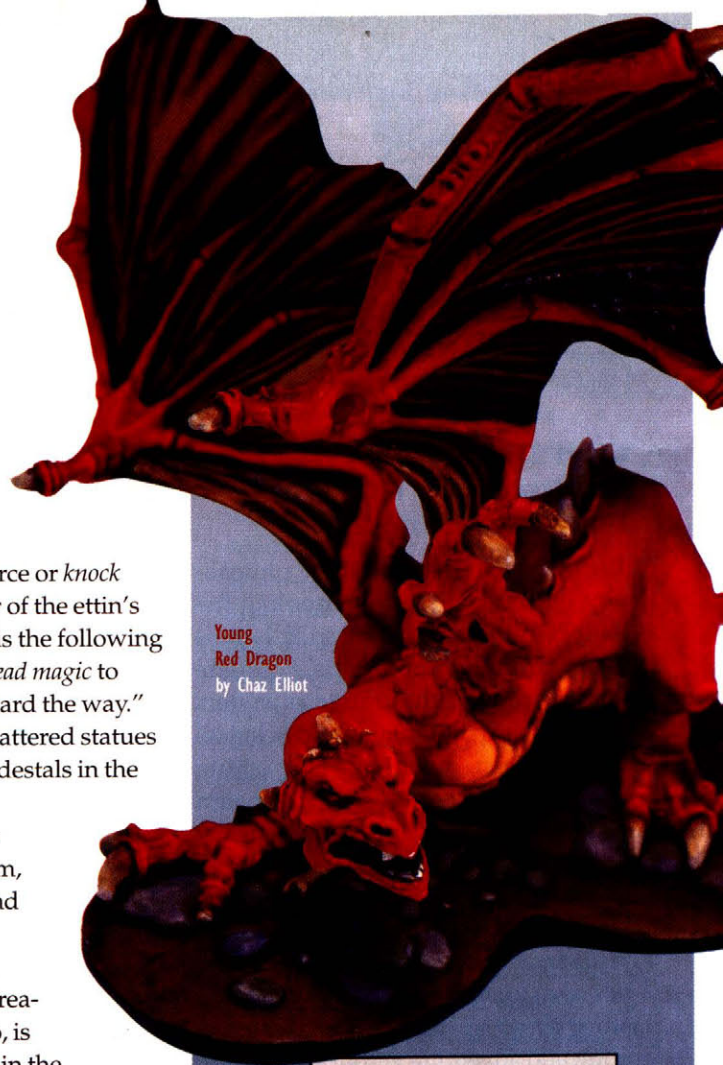
The monsters' cell contains nothing but filth. However, located at the back of the cell is a 4' x 5' secret door too small for the ettin to fit through. The secret door is magically sealed and cannot be

forced open with brute force or *knock* spells. Etched on the floor of the ettin's cell but obscured by filth is the following riddle, which requires a *read magic* to decipher: "The statues guard the way." The riddle refers to the shattered statues lying at the base of the pedestals in the main room.

If two PCs stand on the pedestals in the main room, the secret door unlocks and swings open, revealing a small vault beyond. The vault contains whatever treasure you desire, but it, too, is trapped. A pressure plate in the floor causes the portcullises to drop if one or more PCs enter the vault. A successful Find Traps roll reveals the pressure plate, and it can be disabled with normal chances of success.

Lifting either portcullis using brute strength requires a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll at a -25% penalty. 🐉

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E-Mail: Dwarvenforge@compuserve.com



Young Red Dragon  
by Chaz Elliot



Blood Hawk  
by Neil Mikenzie

By the time you read this, the new **DIABLO** miniatures should be available in better game stores. Here are the "greens," the original sculptures formed of epoxy.



Sorceress

by Jim Johnson  
& Chaz Elliot

Necromancer

by Jim Johnson  
& Chaz Elliot

Paladin

by Chaz Elliot  
& Jason Weibe

Barbarian

by Designer X

The Scayer

by Chaz Elliot

Amazon

by Designer X



# Tormenting Your PCs

By Johnny L. Wilson

## Can DMs learn new tricks from PC Planewalking?

Turn every religion, cult, or philosophy on its edge and extrapolate the logic-defying aspects of such beliefs to near infinite proportions. Populate the environs with strange monsters that cross myth, fantasy, and science-fiction. Then, you have something close to the PLANESCAPE® campaign setting.

In Interplay's *PLANESCAPE: Torment*, you experience the hub of the setting as you explore Sigil: The City of Doors. As Sigil serves as the nexus from which portals open up to every plane of existence, so too does it serve as the origin for every quest and adventure within *PLANESCAPE: Torment*.

*PLANESCAPE: Torment* is a very different type of game (as those who read the full review in TOPDECK™ #5 already know). Your character can die without receiving level penalties or losing his entire inventory. You face a multitude of quests, but you don't necessarily know which ones can provide you with information to advance your quest for self-knowledge. Indeed, *PLANESCAPE: Torment* is so different that it just might offer some terrific ideas or lessons for Dungeon Masters.



## MONSTER vs. MONSTER

When PCs manage to get two or more groups of monsters into melee range, there should be some chance that the monsters might attack each other instead of ganging up on the party as though the monster types were united by a hive mind. Here is a simple chart offering some probabilities based on rudimentary statistics in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome. Note that these probabilities would only occur when there is no direct relationship between the monster types. If a more intelligent monster or archvillain is keeping all of the types in thrall to his or her master plan, ignore this chart. If the more intelligent monster or archvillain is killed in a combat, however, it might be interesting to throw these possibilities into play. It wouldn't be the first time an alliance went awry.

Table 1A gives the percentage chance that a monster group will turn on another monster group during an encounter. If the monster groups have an alliance, the DM should modify these percentages using Table 1B.

Table 1A: Monsters Turning Against Monsters

| Monster Organization | Monster Intelligence Score |     |     |      |       |       |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|
|                      | 0-1                        | 2-4 | 5-7 | 8-10 | 11-14 | 15-21 |
| Brood                | 75%                        | 60% | 45% | 30%  | 15%   | 5%    |
| Family/Clan          | 60%                        | 45% | 30% | 20%  | 10%   | 5%    |
| Herd                 | 70%                        | 50% | 30% | 10%  | 5%    | 5%    |
| Pack                 | 85%                        | 70% | 55% | 40%  | 25%   | 10%   |
| Squad                | 60%                        | 50% | 40% | 30%  | 20%   | 10%   |
| Swarm                | 25%                        | 25% | 25% | 25%  | 25%   | 25%   |
| Solitary             | 80%                        | 55% | 35% | 20%  | 10%   | 5%    |
| Tribe                | 50%                        | 35% | 20% | 10%  | 5%    | 5%    |

Table 1B: Special Modifiers

| Circumstance   | Modifier |
|--|----------|
| Monster groups have a strong alliance                  | -25%     |
| Monster groups have an uneasy alliance                 | -10%     |
| One or more monster groups include a strong leader     | -15%     |
| Monster groups have the same Organization type         | -10%     |
| Monster groups fall within the same Intelligence range | -5%      |

## Monster Mash

One lesson for clever DMs to be gleaned from *PLANESCAPE: Torment* is that monsters don't necessarily attack the PCs. In *Torment*, there are spots where you can irritate some monsters, like the lesser vargouille pictured here, run away from them, hide amid some ghouls that you haven't attacked, and let the ghouls whittle down the new threat. On other occasions, you can join the ghouls in attacking the huge trocopotaca to remove the behemoths more quickly and safely.

### GHOUL FIEND

How often does one monster help you fight off another? Here, this ghoul must like your party, because he's helping you take on a much bigger monster.

A good DM will create occasional chaos by having random NPCs or monsters attack each other. This puts the party of PCs in the position of having to either choose sides or play both against the middle. This situation is particularly challenging—and fun—when it's hard to tell the good guys from the bad.

## Information Squeeze

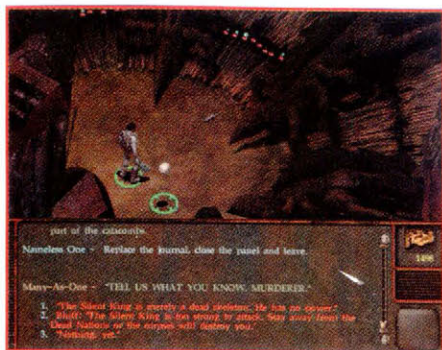
*PLANESCAPE: Torment* also shows DMs how to deal with varying levels of information. In *Torment*, your character's Wisdom and Intelligence scores determine how well he remembers what has happened before. Remember that you do die a lot in this game, and sometimes your memories are not restored after you are resurrected. Charisma and Intelligence determine how many additional pieces



of conversational clues and additional quests your character might receive. In this way, the adventure plays differently for one character than for another.

Think about developing levels of information for most of the important dialogues planned for your adventures. When one of the PCs has a high Charisma, NPCs are obviously going to be more trusting of the party as a whole. The DM should also sprinkle specific names, times and locations throughout the dialogue. When one of the PCs has a high Charisma or appropriate Charisma based skill, it should allow the party to ingratiate themselves with lots of NPCs, even those who might normally be enemies or targets (wink, wink, nudge, nudge). Should one of the PCs be a bard, it should be possible for the bard to leverage some of the knowledge of local lore or information into prying deeper levels of information out of an NPC.

If you have levels and levels of information to be discovered, nested in such a way that it can be pried out by clever PCs based on attribute, skill, and accomplishment specific data. When all else fails, the party should be able to get to nested information by building up their



reputation and serving local patrons well. Just as certain locations open up to players in *PLANESCAPE: Torment* after certain quests are undertaken or accomplished, players in your campaign should have the sense that they understand more and more of the machinations within the game world as they succeed in various tasks.

As players progress in a campaign, even familiar locations should have new surprises that open up as more and more information is revealed. For example, a local temple to one deity may be experiencing nocturnal rituals that would be blasphemous to its diurnal worshippers. Characters might discover this after running afoul of a member of the thieves guild. Certain merchants in the marketplace may have formed a vigilante group to enforce certain trade restrictions, but the party of PCs might not discover this until they perform one or more errands for a prominent tradesman. Such nested information keeps each return to town from being merely a healing and shopping expedition for experienced parties. The game is, to bring in a famous literary anachronism, always afoot.

## Just Plane Fun

For DMs, one of the best things about playing *PLANESCAPE: Torment* is that is full of so many ideas that a few of the quests, items, characters and scrolls are likely to make their way into their own campaigns (whether those campaigns are set in the *PLANESCAPE* campaign setting or not) in various incarnations. For players in general, the best thing about playing *PLANESCAPE: Torment* is that it offers more roleplaying than you usually see in a computer game. The fact that the roleplaying takes place in such a unique and underused setting simply makes it all the better.

## GHOST STORY

Characters with higher Intelligence and Wisdom scores have more dialogue options in *PLANESCAPE: Torment*.

## LIE DETECTOR

Information gathering is not the sole province of a non-weapon proficiency, and it doesn't have to be simply a matter of roleplaying. If you'd like to give your PCs a chance to use their Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma scores in interrogating an NPC, take a hint from *PLANESCAPE: Torment* and reward them for having high numbers in those ability scores.

Of course, you don't want a player to "know" the information an NPC reveals is good simply because she rolled well. To keep an element of suspense, draw up a simple table like the one below before running an encounter in which the heroes might question an NPC. The lower the player rolls under her ability score, the better her chance of getting good information—but there's still a chance of failure on a good roll and success on a bad one.

In this example, the PCs interrogate a petty thief to learn the identity of the local guildmaster, who is the local high priest:

| Roll              | Information   |
|-------------------|---|
| Failure           | 90% chance the thief says it's the local sheriff;<br>10% chance the thief says to watch the back door of the rectory for a clue.                |
| Success           | 60% chance sheriff;<br>30% chance watch rectory;<br>10% chance the thief says the guildmaster is the high priest's secretary.                   |
| Success +1 to 5   | 50% chance sheriff;<br>35% chance watch rectory;<br>10% high priest's secretary;<br>5% chance the thief voices suspicion about the high priest. |
| Success + 6 to 10 | 40% chance sheriff;<br>35% chance watch rectory;<br>15% high priest's secretary;<br>10% high priest.  |
| 11 or more below  | 30% chance sheriff;<br>25% chance watch rectory;<br>25% high priest's secretary;<br>20% high priest.  |

IN A FORGOTTEN BURIAL MOUND AMONG THE KRON HILLS, THE COUNCIL OF EIGHT MEETS A GRISLY FATE...

Nodwick

in:

# LICH THE HENCHMAN STRIKES BACK

## WARS

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

I SAID, "THE COUNCIL OF EIGHT."

VECNA LIVES!

AIEEE!

THANK YOU.

I JUST FELT A DISTURBANCE IN THIS FAIR... EIGHT WIZARDS CRYING OUT IN PAIN, THEN SUDDENLY, SILENCE.

EITHER YOU'RE OFF YOUR MEDICATION OR YOU EXPERIENCED THE BREAKING OF A TELEPATHIC LINK!

THE WIZARDS WERE ALL PEOPLE THAT I'VE HENCHED FOR IN THE PAST, AND THEY WERE ALL REALLY POWERFUL! WE'D BETTER GO TO THE GUILD OF WIZARDRY!

NO NEED. I AM KIERAN JALUCIAN, MASTER OF THE WIZARDS' GUILD. I HAVE A MESSAGE FROM MORDENKAIEN!

WOW! SOMEONE MUST'VE CAST A 'WASTE' SPELL ON THIS MONTH'S PLOT.

HENCHMAN NODWICK: YEARS AGO, YOU SERVED MY FRIENDS, THE COUNCIL OF EIGHT. NOW I ASK YOUR HELP IN OUR STRUGGLE AGAINST VECNA. I REGRET THAT I AM UNABLE TO PRESENT MY REQUEST IN PERSON, BUT ALL DIVINATION SPELLS ARE FAILING, AND MY TRAVELING ROBE IS AT THE CLEANERS. FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COUNCIL AND WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH THE HAND AND EYE OF VECNA; THAT LICH MUST BE STOPPED! HELP US, HENCHMAN NODWICK. YOU'RE OUR ONLY HOPE!

YOU MUST BE SOME HENCHMAN... OR THEY'RE DESPERATE.

WE EAGERLY AWAIT YOUR REPORTS.

HEY, NODWICK? IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A HAND AND AN EYE, WHY DON'T YOU ASK THOSE GUYS?

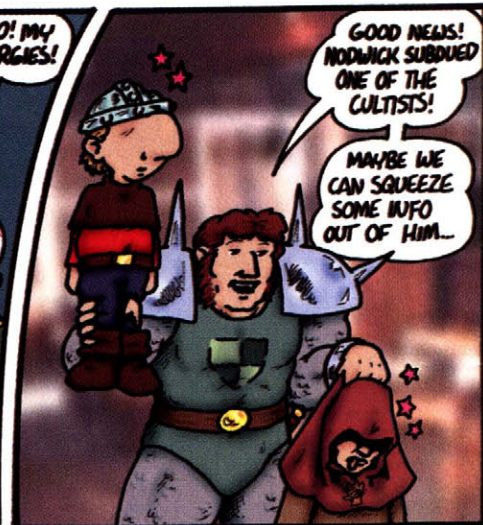
PIFFANY, YOU MIGHT AS WELL ADD THIS TAVERN TO THE LIST OF ESTABLISHMENTS THAT WE'RE BANNED FROM.



TAKE THIS!  
POWER WORD:  
HANGNAIL!

SUMMON  
OVERLY FRIENDLY  
KITTENS!

NODO! MY  
ALLERGIES!



GOOD NEWS!  
NODWICK SUBDUED  
ONE OF THE  
CULTISTS!

MAYBE WE  
CAN SQUEEZE  
SOME INFO  
OUT OF HIM...

INDEED, OUR HEROES LEARNED OF A CULT MEETING IN VERBOBONG.



WELL, WELL! IF  
IT ISN'T FINGER-  
FACE AND THE  
OPTOMETRIST'S  
NIGHTMARE.

I HOPE YOU  
DON'T MIND THAT  
WE INVITED THE  
TOWN GUARD.

WHO'S YOUR  
PAL IN THE CLOAK?  
MR. "EAR-HEAD"?



I AM  
VEGNA!

FOOL! I AM  
THE TRUE  
VEGNA!



AND I NOW  
CLAIM WHAT'S  
MINE!



THANK YOU FOR  
LEADING ME HERE! I SHALL  
REWARD YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.  
COME TO TOYAG BARAGU  
TO COLLECT IT!



I'M GUESSING  
WE'RE GOING TO  
NEED MAGICAL  
WEAPONS TO  
TAKE HIM OUT.  
SAY, A +50  
ASTEROID OF  
SMITING!

THE ONLY PERSON  
TO EVER DEFEAT HIM  
WAS HIS LIEUTENANT,  
KAS. HE DID IT WITH AN  
ULTRA-POWERFUL  
SWORD THAT, ACCORDING  
TO LEGEND, IS HELD BY  
GNOMES IN OSNABROLT.

LATER, OUR HEROES LEAVE OSNABROLT WITH THE SWORD OF KAS.



REMEMBER ME TO  
NEVER GET A WEAPON  
FROM GNOMES AGAIN!

AT LEAST WE DIDN'T HAVE TO  
FINISH THE PURIFICATION RITES.  
GOOD JOB ON BEING DECLARED  
"UNCLEAN FOR LIFE", YEAGAR.



DESTROY  
VEGNA, YOU  
WILL!

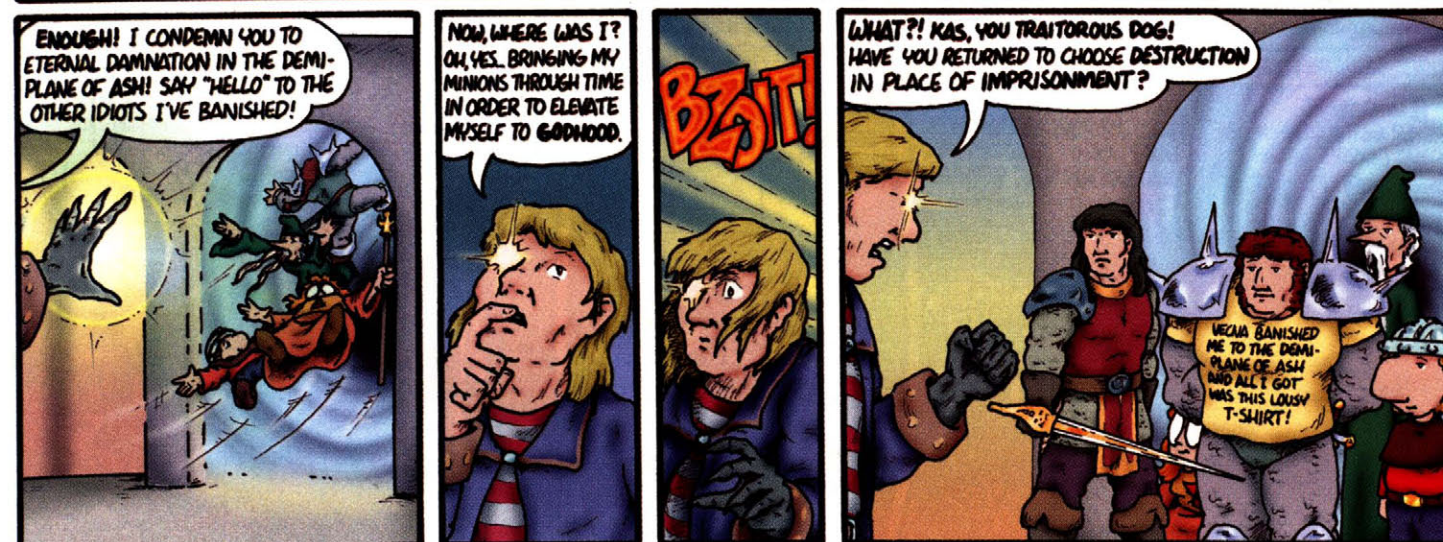
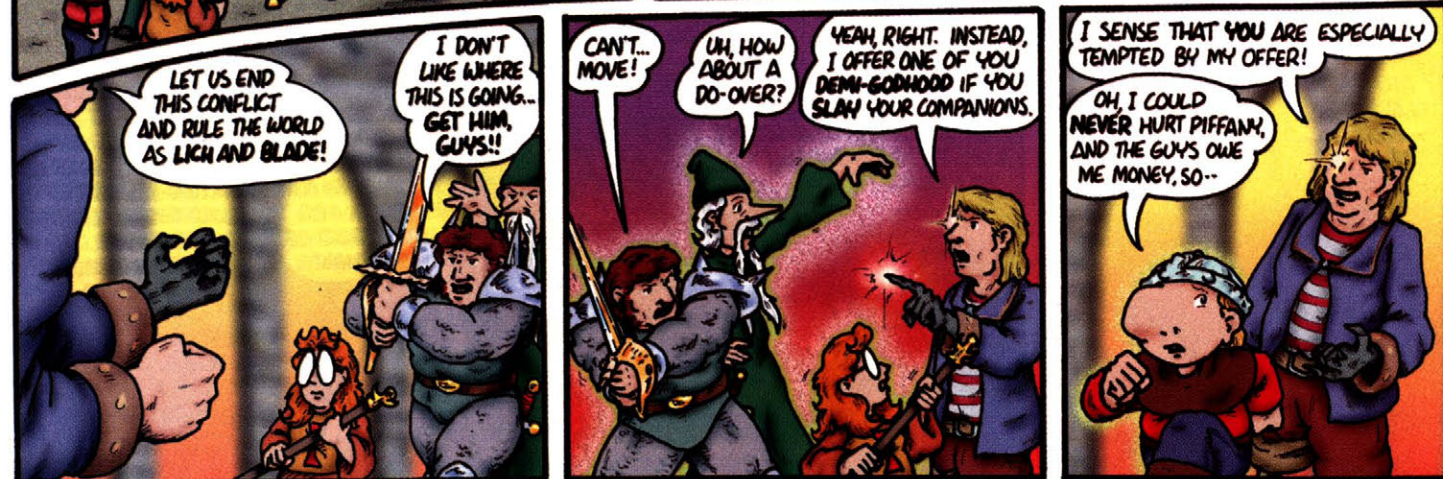
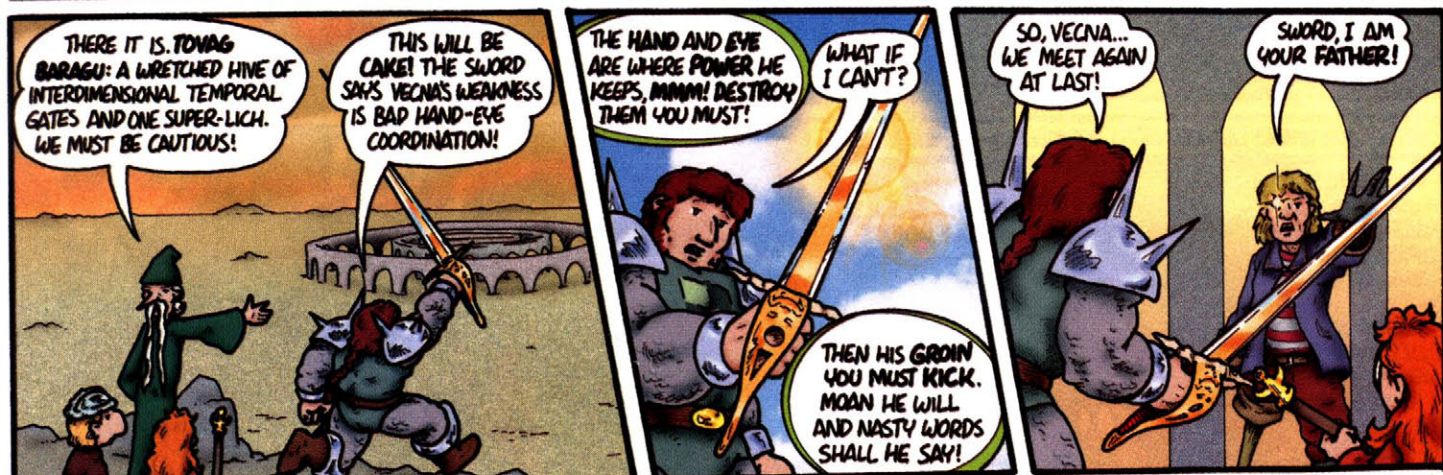
HUH?  
WHO SAID  
THAT?

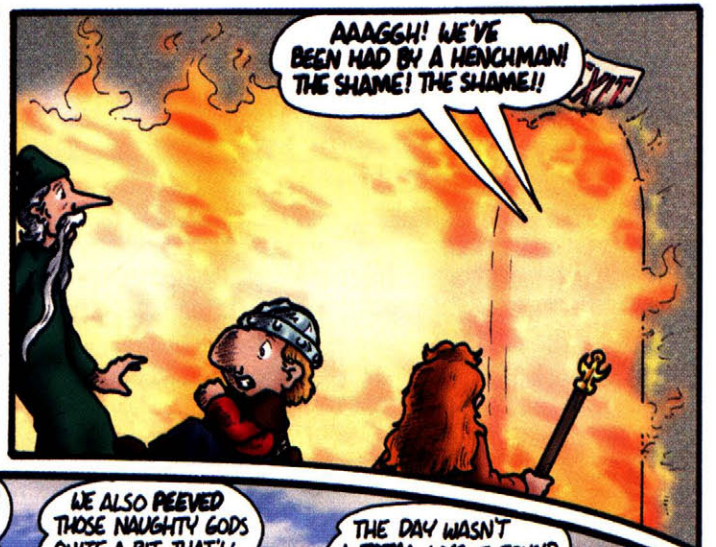
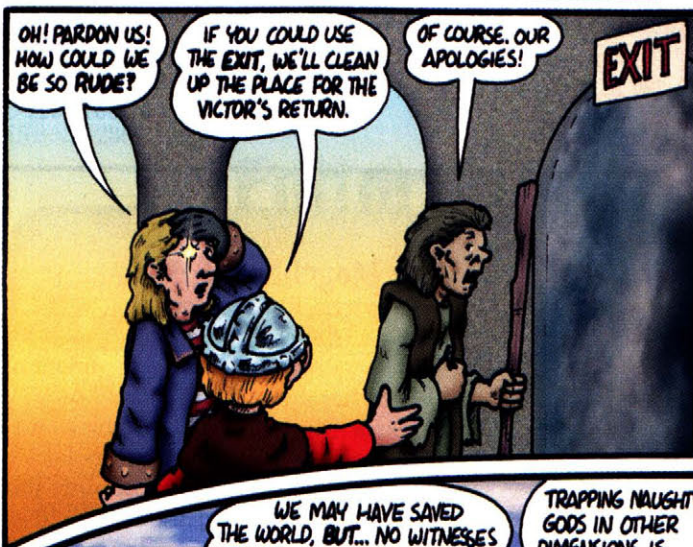


SPEAK, I DID!  
POWER, SHALL I  
GIVE YOU, MIMM!  
TRAIN YOU, I  
SHALL!

Y'KNOW, FOR SOME REASON,  
YOU SOUND SHORT, GREEN,  
AND WRINKLED!

HE'S TALKING  
TO WEAPONS  
AGAIN... WE'D  
BETTER GET THE  
POTIONS OF SLEEPY-  
TIME READY!







# Coming Attractions

## April

### Rebels and Tyrants

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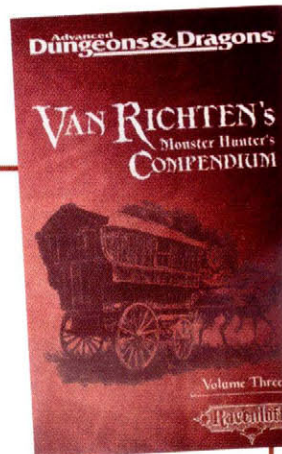
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By Wizards of the Coast staff

For almost a decade, the Van Richten's Guides have been favorites among Dungeon Masters seeking ways to spice up some of the AD&D game's most frequently used monsters. The third and final volume in a series of accessories introducing these classics to a new generation of AD&D players, *Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium, Volume Three* reprints *Van Richten's Guide to Fiends* and *Van Richten's Guide to the Vistani*, annotated by the heirs to his legacy, as were the two previous volumes. It also contains the new, previously unpublished *Van Richten's Guide to Witches*.

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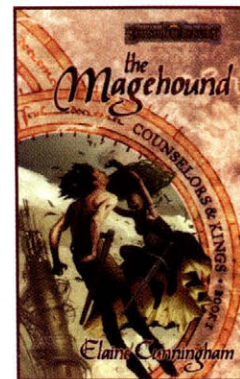
### The Magehound

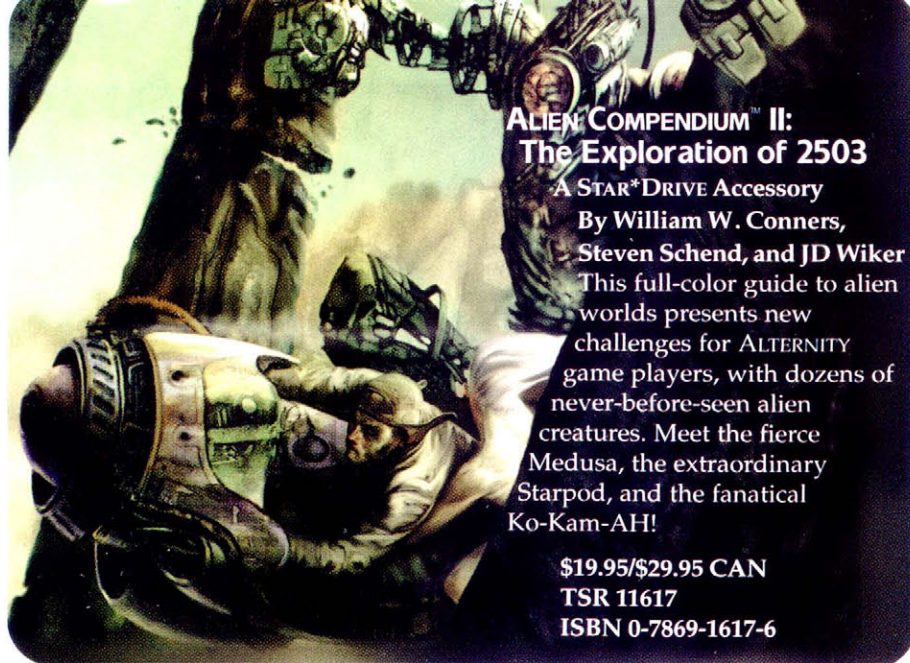
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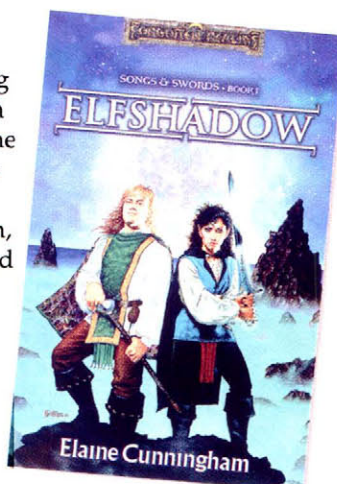
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## Editor's Choice

"It's about time we returned to the best of the classic AD&D adventure series and found out just what the slavers who got away have been up to all these years. Just try not to get captured this time."

•Dave Gross

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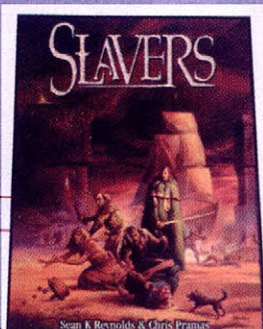
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•Chris Pramas

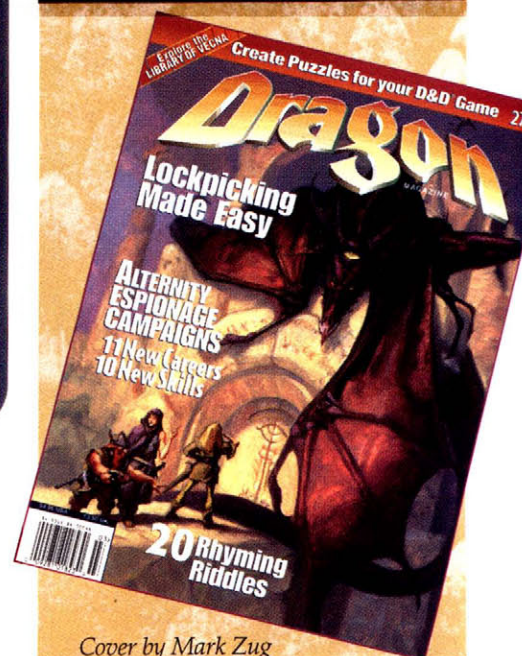


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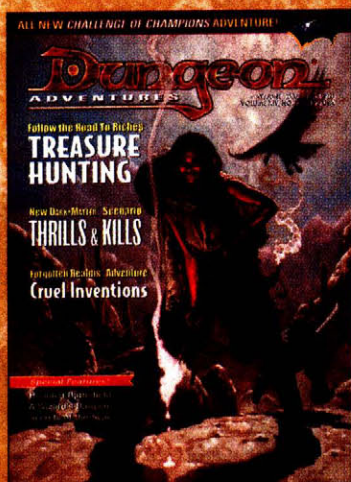
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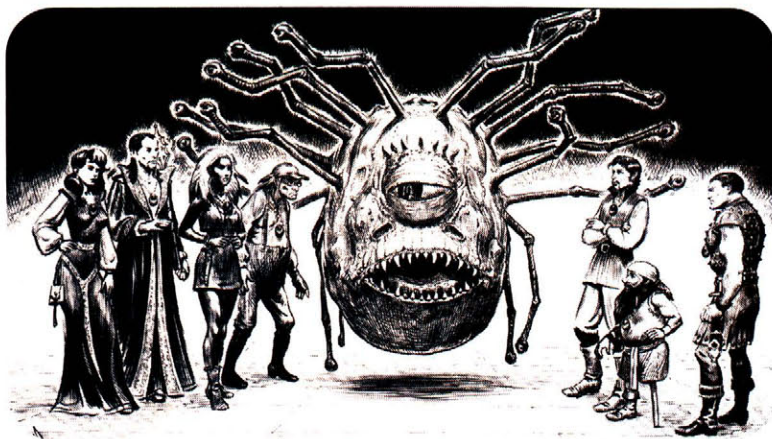
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| Night Masks .....         | FR Novel .....       | \$5.99  |
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### April continued



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# WHAT'S NEW

WITH PHIL AND DIXIE

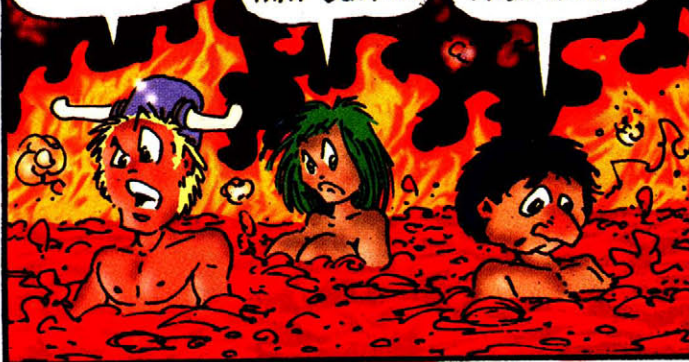
By Phil Foglio

LET'S FACE IT. HELL™ AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE. THESE DAYS, WHENEVER A GAMER WINDS UP THERE (AND WE ALL WILL, ACCORDING TO SOME PEOPLE)

HEY-I'LL BET THAT WAS A REAL DRAGON!

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE PUSHED THAT BUTTON!

YOU MEAN SHE REALLY DIDN'T WANT ME TO KISS HER?!



THEY GET RESCUED BY THE REST OF THE PARTY.

WHY NOT? IT'S ONLY POPULATED WITH EVERY EVIL DEAD PERSON SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME

SOME OF WHOM WERE SENT THERE BY US.

WE DON'T KNOW WHERE HELL IS, OR THE LAYOUT, OR WHERE OUR BOY IS.

HEY- WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHETHER LIVING BEINGS CAN SURVIVE THERE.



LET'S GO!!

THEN YOU HAVE TO PERSUADE HELL TO LET YOUR BUDDY GO. YOU PROBABLY WON'T TRY TO FIGHT THE LEGIONS OF HELL, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO MATCH WITS WITH THE PRINCE OF LIES. GOOD LUCK.

DID YOU GET HIM?

NO- BUT HE SOLD ME SOME INSURANCE.

AND I'LL MAKE BIG MONEY SELLING AMWAY PRODUCTS!

I'VE BECOME A SCIENTOLOGIST!

HE SAID HE STILL RESPECTED ME!



YOU'LL EITHER HAVE TO ENGAGE IN SOME 'CLEVER' RIDDLE GAMES...

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE, SOMETHING— BEGINNING WITH THE LETTER 'F'!



OR ELSE YOU'LL BE SET SOME QUEST OR TASK. BE CAREFUL- AS HELL IS BEST SERVED BY CHAOS, WAR AND DESTRUCTION.

SO ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS DESTROY THIS RING.

JUST THE ONE RING- YES.

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

WELL... YOU COULD GET SUCKED INTO A TRILOGY...



LUCKILY- DEMONS ARE ONLY AS SMART AND QUICK THINKING AS YOUR G.M.

WHEW!

HEY!



HOWEVER, THIS IS JUST A RESCUE FROM AN UNTIMELY DEATH. IF, AT THE AGE OF 106, YOU WIND UP IN HELL AGAIN, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.

GEE... MAYBE I SHOUL'D READ SOME OF THE CLERIC'S PAMPHLETS.

WELCOME BACK ZACK 'FUNNYMAN' ZOOK!



MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN EVERYBODY AN EXPLODING CIGAR ON YOUR WAY OUT.

END!

